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ABSTRACT

This resource monograph updates 1983 and 1984 resource monographs intended as reference tools for New York State school districts considering grade-level reorganization of educational programs for early adolescents. The chapters of this document: (1) summarize contents of the previous monographs; (2) discuss current research and information on middle grades students in terms of emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and personal development; (3) describe the societal and familial contexts of adolescent development and provide statistics describing the adolescent learner; (4) discuss in a developmental framework the educational and other needs of the early adolescent student; (5) provide a brief explanation of Part 100 of the Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education concerning requirements for grades seven and eight; (6) describe how school districts are implementing the requirements of Part 100; (7) provide a discrepancy analysis contrasting what is desirable and what actually occurs in programs for seventh and eighth grade students; and (8) present issues relative to Part 100. A list of references is provided for each chapter. Appended are regulations of the Commissioner concerning program requirements for students in grades seven and eight, a summary of the findings of the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) 1986 survey on educational trends in the middle grades, a summary of the NYSSBA's recommendations, and a supplemental bibliography regarding research on middle grades students with handicapping conditions. (RH)

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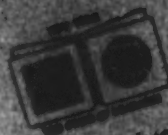
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Resource Monograph on the Middle Grades



The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12234
1987

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RESOURCE MONOGRAPH

ON THE

MIDDLE GRADES

The Pupils

The Programs

The Instructional Processes

The University of the State of New York
The State Education Department
Albany, New York 12234

1987

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FOREWORD

In 1983, the New York State Education Department prepared a Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Reorganization. The purpose of this document was to serve as a reference for school districts that were considering a grade-level reorganization.

The first Resource Monograph was followed, in 1984, by a second publication entitled Resource Monograph on Middle-Grade Students. This second document was intended to provide school districts with additional information about the middle grades and the students in those grades and to serve as a complement to the Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Reorganization.

The present document, the Resource Monograph on the Middle Grades, represents an update of the previous two resource monographs. Its intention is to provide school district personnel and other educators with current information on early adolescents and the middle grades. The information is presented as a reference and a resource for those persons who make educational decisions that affect middle grade students.

Grateful appreciation is given to David A. Payton, Associate, Office of District Superintendents, School District Organization and Development, for gathering the information and writing the Resource Monograph on the Middle Grades.

. . . THE CHALLENGE

if kids
schools were wouldn't try
exciting, so hard
challenging, to be
rewarding absent,
places or be dumb
or be tough.

something says
they would
work harder,
act nicer,
and
learn more
if
schools were
meeting their needs,
awakening their minds
and touching their
hearts.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

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listen to me.

i
will
hear
you.

tell me the truth
and
i
will
not
lie.

trust me
and
i
will
fulfill
your
trust.

be kind to me
and
i
will
give
you
kindness.

expect good
and

i
will
try
to be
good.

accept me
and
i
will
let
you
into
my mind.

touch me
and
i
will
let
you
into
my heart.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Educators have always been interested in and concerned about students and programs in the middle grades. More recent events--the adoption of the New York State Board of Regents Action Plan to Improve Elementary and Secondary Results in New York, the promulgation of the new Part 100 of the Regulations of the New York State Commissioner of Education, the emergence of the middle school concept, the need to provide all students, including those with handicapping conditions, those who are limited English proficient, and those who are disadvantaged, full access to curricular and extracurricular programs and activities, the focus on the student-at-risk, and the heightened concern for the early adolescent learner--have again focused attention on the pivotal seventh and eighth grades.

In 1983, staff from the New York State Education Department's Office of General Education prepared a Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Reorganization that contained information and materials on the middle school and the middle school student useful to school districts contemplating a grade-level reorganization:

Many of the advantages and disadvantages of the various grade-level configurations stem from the special needs and characteristics of students between the ages of 11 and 14. Following is an examination of the middle school and its students to better understand the characteristics of middle-school students that might influence decisions about grade-level organizations.

Students between the ages of 11 and 14 are called many things--inbetweenagers, young teens, etc. This age group experiences the most dramatic growth period in the development of the human organism since infancy. Characteristics of the period are:

1. resentment of authority figures
2. ambivalence concerning dependence
3. transfer of recognition from adults to peers
4. emancipation from the home
5. fluctuation of emotions
6. development of changing values
7. concern about physical growth
8. development of self-concept
9. social and sexual maturation
10. beginning intellectual maturation. (p. 34)

The Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Reorganization further amplified the unique developmental situation of students in the middle grades:

....(D)uring the ages from about 10 to about 13, children go through a similar developmental and difficulty growth period that sets them apart from those younger or older. More specifically, students in this age group (who would be in middle schools) exhibit particular intellectual, physical, psychological, and social developments:

Intellectual Development:

- Children of this age are moving from a dependence on information toward an ability to deal with abstract information; they begin to reason.
- Individual intellectual differences of children of this age are considerably greater than those of younger children.
- Children at this age have learned more earlier than was true 25 years ago and can profit from instruction presented by academic specialists using more advanced teaching equipment, techniques, and facilities.
- Children at this age (10 to 12) experience a measurable period of tremendous brain growth and increased intellectual capacity.
- A period of transition between the generally self-contained classroom of the elementary school and the totally departmentalized classroom of the high school is advantageous for children of this age.
- Having developed the fundamentals of academic skills, children at this age profit from the opportunities to explore other subject areas through science labs, home economics and industrial arts facilities, foreign languages, and so forth.
- Children at this age begin to develop strong, personal opinions about school and education....

Physical Development:

- Individual physiological differences of children at this age are considerably greater than those of

children who are younger or older.

- Children at this age enter puberty; the average age of entrance into puberty is younger than it was 25 years ago.
- Children at this age experience dramatic spurts in their physical development, although the organs, bones, and muscles do not grow at the same rate and time.
- Children at this age need comprehensive physical activity programs and facilities to accommodate fluctuations in basal metabolism.
- Children at this age are relatively free from illness, but dietary and sleeping habits tend to be poor.
- Children at this age are heavier and taller than their counterparts 25 years ago.

Psychological Developments:

- Children at this age experience widely varying moods and display erratic and inconsistent behavior.
- Children at this age begin to develop their own aspirations.
- Children at this age want to be "adult" without losing the safety of childhood.
- The emotional patterns of children at this age are becoming established.
- Children at this age tend to be self-conscious and easily embarrassed.
- Children at this age are struggling to form constructive self-images.
- The dramatic changes of puberty dominate the thoughts of children at this age.

Social Developments:

- Heterosexual interest develops in children at this age.
- Children at this age increasingly seek approval

from their peers, decreasingly from adults.

- Children at this age tend to increasingly resent adult restrictions.
- Differences in social development are considerably greater in children at this age than in children younger or older.
- Children at this age tend to model their behavior on that of older students....
- As children of this age develop socially, it is advantageous to have a larger, more diverse population of peers.
- Children at this age experiment with language and other social behaviors they have never tried before and will not try again.
- The dramatic changes of puberty dominate the social interactions of children of this age.
- While children at this age are struggling to become independent, they tend to get lost without the security of family, peers, and school. (pp. 34-37)

School district personnel found this information on the middle grade student presented in the 1983 Resource Monograph extremely useful and necessary, but not sufficient. They asked that a second document be prepared that dealt directly with the early adolescent student. In 1984, staff from the Office of General Education prepared a companion Resource Monograph on Middle-Grade Students that provided:

....more information specifically focusing on the middle grades--grades 5,6,7,8,9,--and the changing nature of the students in those grades. (p. iii)

Since the publication of the second Resource Monograph, pediatric and educational research has provided additional support for viewing the development and needs of early adolescent learners as unique. Further, there has been renewed attention focused on such critical topics as the problem of the potential dropout and on the changing nature of the American family and American society. In light of this new information and these new concerns, it is important to reassess the content and the delivery of the instructional program for the middle grades--particularly grades seven and eight--and the Regulations of the Commissioner that govern the program.

What I Don't Like About School

IF i thank about it I get all upset. SO I
better pass on this one today.

Thanks. No hard feelens.

what i donlike school - NO A
what i dont like school is that i come evey day
thanking i will get a A. But I never get a A.
Just wonst I want to get a A. Ever sins I
remember I go to school a thousand day a
year or more I get no A. No A

JUST WONST I WANT AN A
ONE BIG FAT A

All I git is a gib funch of F
A hundred F. A thousand F
A lowsy bunch of F

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

This Resource Monograph on the Middle Grades is the third in a series and is intended to assist local school district personnel and other educators in providing the best possible education for students in the middle grades.

Purposes of the Resource Monograph on the Middle Grades: T h e purposes of this Resource Monograph are to:

- update the research and information on the early adolescent student contained in the two previous Resource Monographs. This update focuses on the characteristics of the middle grades student in terms of his or her emotional, physical, psychological, social, and intellectual development.
- describe the changing nature of the American family and American society in relation to the early adolescent student.
- describe the educational and other needs of the middle grades students in light of the changing nature of the American family and society and the unique characteristics of this group and discuss the various educational and instructional approaches suggested by educational and child development experts to meet the needs of the adolescent learner.
- describe the educational requirements for seventh and eighth grade as contained in Commissioner's Regulations.
- describe how school districts are implementing the Commissioner's Regulations in grades seven and eight.
- compare the needs of the early adolescent learner, the prescribed requirements contained in Commissioner's Regulations for grades seven and eight, and the implementation efforts within school districts related to the Regulations.
- generate recommendations, if needed, on how the needs of early adolescent students can better be met in grades seven and eight either through changes in Regulations, programs, or delivery systems, or a combination of the three.

Organization of the Resource Monograph: The Resource Monograph is organized into major chapters that correspond to the above purposes. The content of each chapter includes:

Chapter One: Introductory Comments

This section includes a brief summary of the information on adolescents contained in the two Resource Monographs prepared previously by the State Education Department and a discussion of the purposes of this Resource Monograph.

Chapter Two: Recent Information on Early Adolescence

This chapter provides and describes the most current research and information available on the middle grades student in terms of his or her emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and other personal development.

Chapter Three: Society and the Family

This part of the Resource Monograph describes the societal and familial contexts in which the "average" early adolescent student is developing. Included are statistics describing the adolescent learner.

Chapter Four: Educational and Other Needs of the Early Adolescent

This section describes the educational and other needs of the early adolescent student in light of his or her development. Here is where the advice and opinions of various child development and educational experts are presented.

Chapter Five: Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner

Here is a brief explanation of the requirements for grades seven and eight as contained in Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner.

Chapter Six: Implementation of Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner in Grades Seven and Eight

This chapter describes how school districts are implementing the requirements of Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner. In this section is information on such topics as student schedules in general, the number of students requiring remedial instruction and in what areas, professional staffing, etc.

Chapter Seven: What is and What Should Be

This part brings the discussions of the previous six chapters together and states what is desirable in seventh and eighth grades in light of the adolescent student and what is actually being done. This chapter provides a "discrepancy analysis."

Chapter Eight: Issues

Based upon the information in Chapter Seven, issues relative to Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner and grades seven and eight are presented.

It is important, at this point, to define what the term adolescence means. Unfortunately, it is in such great measure a construct of social legislation and norms that there is little consensus. Konopka uses:

that span of a young person's life between the obvious onset of puberty and the completion of bone growth. (1973, p. 2)

Certain universal phenomena such as the adolescent growth spurt and the emergence of secondary sex characteristics are the common biological marker events of early adolescence. Once out of the area of universal endocrine changes, adolescence is determined and defined in various ways: culturally (entering junior high school), psychologically (a growing awareness of personal destiny), or legislatively (child labor restrictions). Lipsitz makes the point that:

Given our difficulty in defining adolescence, early adolescence, and preadolescence, and our lack of consensus about their delimiting marker events and their origins, we are often tempted to ask whether there is such a stage in the life span as adolescence, or whether it is so strongly determined by social views and contexts that efforts at definition are useless. Whatever....there is growing consensus that the resolution of biological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes during early adolescence, changes unique in the life span in intensity, helps determine the quality of one's adult life. The years from ten to fourteen form a critical time in human development. (1980, p. 13)

References:

Konopka, Gisela, "Requirements of Healthy Development of Adolescent Youth." Adolescence, Volume 8, Fall, 1973, pp. 1-15.

Lipsitz, Joan S., "The Age Group," in Toward Adolescence: The Middle School Years. The Seventy-ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, part 1. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980, pp. 7-31.

Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Reorganization. Albany, NY: New York State Education Department, 1983.

Resource Monograph on Middle-Grade Students. Albany, NY: New York State Education Department, 1984.

I'm sorry but I can't say I'm sorry.

I'm frightened but I'll never admit it.

I want you to like me but I do things
to get you angry.

I forget my homework when I do it.

I break my promise to try harder.

I sometimes cheat even when I know the answers.

Don't you know that when I'm bad,
I'm in the most pain?

Please don't give up on me . . .
Everyone else has.

ROBERT A. RICKEN
Love Me When I'm Most Unlovable:
The Middle School Years, 1985

CHAPTER TWO: RECENT INFORMATION ON EARLY ADOLESCENCE

What is known now about the middle grades student, as opposed to what was known when the first two Resource Monographs were written, in no way conflicts. Rather, the most current information on early adolescents argues, even more strongly, for viewing this group as one with unique needs and concerns. Lipsitz, writing in the Seventy-ninth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, summarized the common belief of the day that early adolescence represented an increasingly troubled time:

School violence reaches its height during the junior high years. The most dangerous place for a seventh grader to be is in school. The only age group for which the birth rate is not decreasing is that of fifteen-year-olds and under. The average age of runaways is fourteen and a half. The average age of children in foster care is twelve. Juvenile crime appears to "blossom" around age fourteen. Somewhere between 20 percent and 30 percent of eighth graders drink excessively. Drug abuse soars in the junior high years. The suicide rate among young adolescents, while lower than for youth aged sixteen to twenty-two, is rising rapidly, and may have doubled in the past twenty years. (1980, p. 8)

The New York State School Boards Association, in a publication entitled Meeting in the Middle: Directions in Schooling for Young Adolescents, highlights several of the more alarming adolescent statistics:

In the United States there are one million runaways, aged 12 to 14, each year. It is feared that numbers of "throwaways," those asked to leave by parents or guardians, are comparable. One in four babies is born to a teen mother. One in ten adolescents has contemplated suicide, and 5,000 commit it each year. One in nine will be involved with the juvenile justice system before or during adolescence. According to the Quest National Center Institute on early adolescence, of the 30 percent of high school seniors who admittedly have an alcohol problem, the average age given for initial consumption of alcohol was 11 to 11 1/2 years old. In recent years there has been an increase in all types of pathological behavior among adolescents. The incidence of homicide, suicide and out of wedlock births has increased from 200 to 400 percent....(1987, p. 2)

Lipsitz, in "Testimony Prepared for the Crisis Intervention

Task Force House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families," said about adolescence:

Biologically, adolescence consists of the years between the onset of puberty and the completion of bone growth. Puberty begins when the gonads secrete hormones in sufficient amount to cause accelerated growth and the appearance of secondary sex characteristics. Some adolescents integrate the often dramatic changes in their bodies with relative ease. For others, puberty is a disruptive experience. Feelings of loss of control and helplessness are not uncommon. Disturbances in self-esteem can be exacerbated when many changes occur at once....It is difficult for adolescents to cope with internal and external disruption simultaneously.

The onset of various marker events of puberty.... are so variable that it is difficult for adolescents to feel "average"--i.e., normal. While the range of normal onset can be six years, every adolescent wants to come straight in on the 50 yard line, right down the middle of the field. One is always too tall, too short, too thin, too fat, too hairy, too clear-skinned, too early, too late. Problems of self image are understandably rampant.....

If the tasks of adolescence were isolated phenomena rather than part of a continuum, they would be less critical. Adolescence is a pivotal time in life; events in adolescence are in large measure determined by what has happened before and determine much of what follows. (Erikson, 1968, p. 23)

One of the tasks of adolescence is exploring one's personal uniqueness and relatedness to other human beings. A paradox of adolescence is that one achieves this sense of individuality only when one sees oneself in terms of a larger social context. Identity is grounded in the world of others. (Lipsitz, 1980, pp. 7-31) Thus, adolescents are utterly dependent on others to reflect to them a positive, realistic image of themselves that they can integrate into their own inner image....All too many adolescents fail to receive consistent positive, realistic reflections of themselves from the adults on whom they are deeply dependent....

Also critical to adolescent development is the gradual process of separation from parental authority and the strengthening of personal autonomy. The key word here is "gradual," since separation is a lengthy

process, not an event. Those youngsters for whom separation becomes an event....are at considerable risk of becoming one of the dreadful statistics we are discussing today.

A critical task of adolescence is breaking through a characteristic form of egocentrism that David Elkind (1967, pp. 1025-34) calls the "personal fable." This is a story the adolescent tells himself or herself and believes to be true: that he or she is unique, immune, even immortal....Many adolescents, especially young adolescents,....feel that "it can't happen to me"--I can't get pregnant; I can't crash in this car; I can't get hooked on drugs....Adolescents are not being perverse by feeling immune. They are being normal. The combination of this sense of immunity with the adolescents' need to take risks to be adventuresome and spontaneous is one aspect of adolescent development that makes them so vulnerable to danger....

Adolescence is a time in life characterized by striving for achievement and competence. This view of adolescence is so radically different from social stereotypes that it bears underscoring. Konopka (1973, pp. 11-12) talks about adolescence as an "age of commitment," a move into "true interdependence." Commitment includes a search for one's identity but also "points toward the emotional, intellectual, and sometimes physical reach for other people as well as ideas, ideologies, causes, work choices." According to Konopka, to acknowledge adolescence as an age of commitment is to elevate it from a stage to be "endured and passed through as rapidly as possible to a stage of earnest and significant human development." Adolescents, shaky in self-esteem, beginning to have a new-found sense of personal destiny, and intensely self-conscious, are dependent on adults to afford them opportunities for achievement, competence, and commitment....

While....it is impossible to obtain reliable mental health statistics, the consistent theme of low self-esteem that pervades the literature on substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, dropouts, truancy, juvenile crime, and suicide is striking. I have never seen or read about a successful crisis intervention or prevention program for adolescents that did not address the issue of low self-esteem, directly or indirectly. It is the Achilles' heel of adolescent development and the linchpin of successful programs. (1983, pp. 8-11)

In 1985, Dorman, Lipsitz, and Verner reiterated the uniqueness of the young adolescent:

Early adolescence is a time of rapid growth and change, as young people begin the physical and social transition from childhood to adulthood. Socially, young adolescents begin to separate from their parents, test their developing sense of autonomy, establish close peer relationships, and reach out beyond the family to connect with a larger social sphere. They also begin to develop the cognitive ability to think abstractly, to think seriously about their personal futures in relation to their social context, and to reflect on social and personal values and motives. These changes come at different times and at different rates, thus creating the notorious diversity of this age group.

....Profound changes do occur....and integrating these changes into the past, present, and future in a way that makes sense can be a confusing and consuming task for young adolescents. Nor do they shed their excitement and confusion about these changes when they enter the school door. (pp. 45-46)

The Committee on Middle Level Education of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, in an undated publication, speaks directly to the question of "Who are 'The Kids in the Middle'" with the following:

Biologically speaking, adolescence begins with puberty--some time between the ages of 10 and 15. We know that at no other period in the life cycle does such a variance exist in the rate of individual development. Research indicates that there can be as much as an eight-year range in achievement in any single grade. Similar variances can exist in intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development. Early adolescents differ from students at the elementary and high school levels in many ways. Difference is their common characteristic as bodily changes occur at times and in ways which are neither predictable nor regular. In addition, changes in our culture during the past three decades have set adolescents even more apart from the rest of society....For the "kids in the middle" these changes may lead them to be:

- Impulsive in actions and impatient with restrictions.
- Preoccupied with popularity and self-conscious about appearance.

- Deeply influenced by mass media and responsive to fads.
- Plagued by mood swings and subject to forgetfulness and boredom.
- Assertive in independence and moved by competitive situations.
- Charged with energy, confused by self-doubt, and fearful of failure.
- Embarrassed by social customs and veneered with "wisecracks."

....This can be an anxiety-fraught period for young people, and it goes without saying that this can also be a trying period for the adults who live and work with them. The interest and attention span of students in this age group vacillate dramatically, and there is both a desire and need to move around and participate in action-oriented or "hands-on" activities. Students are very aware of peer interests, modes of dress, grooming, and the like. They frequently challenge the authority of their parents and teachers, and constantly want to know "why" something is the way it is. Learning rates are not constant, but rather proceed sporadically and unpredictably. Students may act in a mature, responsible manner at one time and then revert to childish, immature behavior soon afterward. They often feel a need for discipline and direction, and yet they also will struggle and seek freedom and independence. They are innately curious, but are alternately very easy and very difficult to motivate. (On the Threshold of Adolescence: A Statement on Schools in the Middle and the Students They Serve, pp. 1-2)

Wiles and Bondi summarize the characteristics of emerging adolescents:

Physical Development

- Accelerated physical development begins in transescence marked by increases in weight, height, muscular strength. Boys and girls are growing at varying rates of speed. Girls tend to be taller for the first two years and tend to be more physically advanced. Bone growth is faster than muscle development and the uneven muscle/bone development results in lack of coordination and awkwardness. Bones may lack protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons.
- In the pubescent stage for girls, secondary sex characteristics continue to develop with breasts enlarging and menstruation beginning.

- A wide range of individual differences among students begins to appear in pre-pubertal and pubertal stages of development. Although the sequential order of development is relatively consistent in each sex, boys tend to lag a year or two behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The age of greatest variability in physiological development and physical size is about age 13.
- Fluctuations in basal metabolism may cause students to be extremely restless at times and listless at others.
- Shows ravenous appetites and peculiar tastes, may overtax the digestive system with large quantities of improper foods.

Social Development

- Affiliation base broadens from family to peer group. Conflict sometimes results due to splitting of allegiance between peer group and family.
- "Puppy love years"--shows extreme devotion to a particular boy or girl friend, but may transfer allegiance to a new friend overnight.
- Feels the will of the group must prevail--sometimes almost cruel to those not in their group. Copies and displays fads of extremes in clothes, speech, mannerisms, and handwriting; very susceptible to advertising.
- Strong concern for what is "right" and for social justice. Shows concern for less-fortunate others.
- Is influenced by adults--attempts to identify with adults other than their parents.
- Despite a trend toward heterosexual interests, same-sex affiliation tends to dominate during transescence.
- Desires direction and regulation but reserves the right to question or reject suggestions of adults.

Emotional Development

- Is easily offended and sensitive to criticism of personal shortcoming.
- Students tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe their problems are unique.

Intellectual Development

- Emerging adolescents display a wide range of skills and abilities unique to their developmental patterns.
- Students range in development from the concrete--manipulatory state of development to the ability to deal with abstract concepts. The transescent is intensely curious and growing in mental ability.
- Middle school learners prefer active over passive learning activities, prefer interaction with peers during learning activities.
- Students in the middle school are usually very curious and exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful. Students enjoy using skills to solve "real life" problems. (1986, pp. 84-87)

The Appendix of a recent report by the California State Department of Education entitled Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools contains a consolidated list of the characteristics of the middle grade student gleaned from the most current research. The characteristics are as follows:

A. Intellectual Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Display a wide range of individual intellectual development as their minds experience transition from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the capacity for abstract thought. This transition ultimately makes possible:
 - Propositional thought
 - Consideration of ideas contrary to fact
 - Reasoning with hypotheses involving two or more variables

- Appreciation for the elegance of mathematical logic expressed in symbols
 - Insight into the nuances of poetic metaphor and musical notation
 - Analysis of the power of a political ideology
 - Ability to project thought into the future, to anticipate, and to formulate goals
 - Insight into the sources of previously unquestioned attitudes, behaviors, and values
 - Generalization of larger concepts and generalizations of traditional wisdom expressed through sayings, axioms, and aphorisms;
2. Are intensely curious;
 3. Prefer active over passive learning experiences; favor interaction with peers during learning activities;
 4. Exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful; enjoy using skills to solve real life problems;
 5. Are egocentric; argue to convince others; exhibit independent, critical thought;
 6. Consider academic goals as a secondary level of priority; personal-social concerns dominate thoughts and activities;
 7. Experience the phenomenon of meta-cognition--the ability to know what one knows and does not know;
 8. Are intellectually at-risk; face decisions that have the potential to affect major academic values with lifelong consequences.

B. Physical Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Experience accelerated physical development marked by increases in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength;
2. Mature at varying rates of speed. Girls tend to be taller for the first two years of early adolescence and are ordinarily more physically developed than boys;

3. Experience bone growth faster than muscle development; uneven muscle/bone development results in lack of coordination and awkwardness; bones may lack protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons;
4. Reflect a wide range of individual differences which begin to appear in prepubertal and pubertal stages of development. Boys tend to lag behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The greatest variability in physiological development and size occurs at about age 13;
5. Experience biological development five years sooner than adolescents of the last century; the average age of menarche has dropped from 17 to 12 years of age;
6. Face responsibility for sexual behavior before full emotional and social maturity has occurred;
7. Show changes in body contour including temporarily large noses, protruding ears, long arms; have posture problems;
8. Are often disturbed by body changes:
 - girls are anxious about physical changes that accompany sexual maturation;
 - boys are anxious about receding chins, cowlicks, dimples, and changes in their voices;
9. Experience fluctuations in basal metabolism which can cause extreme restlessness at times and equally extreme listlessness at other moments;
10. Have ravenous appetites and peculiar tastes; may overtax digestive system with large quantities of improper foods;
11. Lack physical health; have poor levels of endurance, strength, and flexibility; as a group are fatter and unhealthier;
12. Are physically at-risk; major causes of death are homicide, suicide, accident, and leukemia.

C. Psychological Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Are often erratic and inconsistent in their behavior; anxiety and fear are contrasted with periods of bravado; feelings shift between superiority and inferiority;
2. Have chemical and hormonal imbalances which often trigger emotions that are frightening and poorly understood; may regress to more childish behavior patterns at this point;
3. Are easily offended and are sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings;
4. Tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe that personal problems, experiences, and feelings are unique to themselves;
5. Are moody, restless; often feel self-conscious and alienated; lack self-esteem; are introspective;
6. Are searching for adult identity and acceptance even in the midst of intense peer group relationships;
7. Are vulnerable to naive opinions, one sided arguments;
8. Are searching to form a conscious sense of individual uniqueness--"Who am I?";
9. Have emerging sense of humor based upon increased intellectual ability to see abstract relationships; appreciate the "double entendre";
10. Are basically optimistic, hopeful;
11. Are psychologically at-risk; at no other point in human development is an individual likely to encounter so much diversity in relation to oneself and others.

D. Social Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Experience often traumatic conflicts due to conflicting loyalties to peer groups and family;
2. Refer to peers as sources for standards and models of behavior; media heroes and heroines are also singularly important in shaping both behavior and fashion;

3. May be rebellious towards parents but still strongly dependent upon parental values; want to make own choices, but the authority of the family is a critical factor in ultimate decisions;
4. Are impacted by high level of mobility in society; may become anxious and disoriented when peer group ties are broken because of family relocation to other communities;
5. Are often confused and frightened by new school settings which are large and impersonal;
6. Act out unusual or drastic behavior at times; may be aggressive, daring, boisterous, argumentative;
7. Are fiercely loyal to peer group values; sometimes cruel or insensitive to those outside the peer group;
8. Want to know and feel that significant adults, including parents and teachers, love and accept them; need frequent affirmation;
9. Sense negative impact of adolescent behaviors on parents and teachers; realize thin edge between tolerance and rejection; feelings of adult rejection drive the adolescent into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group;
10. Strive to define sex role characteristics; search to establish positive social relationships with members of the same and opposite sex;
11. Experience low risk-trust relationships with adults who show lack of sensitivity to adolescent characteristics and needs;
12. Challenge authority figures; test limits of acceptable behavior;
13. Are socially at-risk; adult values are largely shaped conceptually during adolescence; negative interactions with peers, parents, and teachers may compromise ideals and commitments.

E. Moral and Ethical Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Are essentially idealistic; have a strong sense of fairness in human relationships;

2. Experience thoughts and feelings of awe and wonder related to their expanding intellectual and emotional awareness;
3. Ask large, unanswerable questions about the meaning of life; do not expect absolute answers but are turned off by trivial adult responses;
4. Are reflective, analytical, and introspective about their thoughts and feelings;
5. Confront hard moral and ethical questions for which they are unprepared to cope;
6. Are at-risk in the development of moral and ethical choices and behaviors; primary dependence upon the influences of home and church for moral and ethical development seriously compromises adolescents for whom these resources are absent; adolescents want to explore the moral and ethical issues which are confronted in the curriculum, in the media, and in the daily interactions they experience in their families and peer groups. (1987, pp. 144-148)

In 1983 and 1984, when the first two State Education Department Resource Monographs were prepared, the available information indicated that adolescence was a time of tremendous change. Current studies confirm and reaffirm the extensive changes that accompany the transition from childhood to adulthood. This We Believe, published by the National Middle School Association, succinctly describes the particular circumstances of the early adolescent:

Each age or developmental level has particular characteristics which might seem to warrant the label of unique, but no other age level has so clear and legitimate a claim to the designation of unique as does this period of transition between childhood and full-blown adolescence, roughly ages 10 to 14. During this phase of life, dramatic and far reaching changes occur in every aspect of one's being. While the physical changes are most obvious, they are accompanied by equally influential but less obvious changes in the social, emotional, and intellectual make-up of individuals. The trauma of pubescent metamorphosis is complicated further by the wide range in both the time that these changes begin and in the rate at which they develop in individuals. For instance, girls mature one and a half to two years earlier than boys, but some boys reach pubescence before some girls do. At no

other time of life are the differences between individuals so great. Individuals of the same age may well vary two feet in height and a hundred pounds in weight with comparable differences in intellectual and social development....

The challenge of middle school education, then, is to develop an educational program that is based on the needs and characteristics of a most diverse and varied population. (1982, p. 3)

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CHAPTER THREE: SOCIETY AND THE FAMILY

Research has shown that the passage through adolescence is one of the most difficult trips in a person's life. The only constant apparent is change itself--in physical development, emotional development, intellectual development, social development. Every day is a new journey toward an unknown destination. Historically, such institutions as the family, the church, the community, and the school provided guidance and assistance to the adolescent. That appears to be less the case today. More and more it appears that the traditional support groups are no longer providing the needed guidance and help for adolescents.

Wiles and Bondi identify some of the changes that are occurring within American society and within American families that are having a profound effect upon adolescents. Their conclusion is:

Middle school students have become victims of a changing society. Social problems in our society have had and are having a profound influence on emerging adolescents. Consider the following:

The American Family Is Changing: The "Typical" American Household Does Not Exist Any More

- One of two children will spend some time in a single parent home by the time they are in the middle grades. Thirty percent of students are latch-key children. Many children spend 3-4 hours at home alone after school before a parent arrives.
- 15 percent of children today are (born out of wedlock).
- Only 16 percent of American households today have the family pattern of a mother at home and a working husband.
- The median age for first marriages for women in 1985 was 23, the highest ever recorded, and 25.5 for men, the highest since 1900. Later marriages and second marriages result in later parenthood. Many parents of middle school students are in their late forties. The number of older mothers tripled in the period between 1970 and 1986.
- More than 40 percent of divorced, separated, or single women received no financial assistance from the fathers of their children.

- 15 percent of American students speak a (first language that is other than English).
- 20 percent of American students live in poverty.
- 15 percent of students have a physical or mental handicap.
- one in four students who leaves middle school in 8th grade fails to graduate. The middle school represents the last chance for schooling for many students.
- Along with fewer children in the average American family, there are fewer adults as well.
- The largest number of adults in the history of the United States held second jobs in the period between 1980 and 1988.

Mental Health of Youth Is a Major Concern in the United States

- National mental health sources show that the second leading cause of death among teenagers, after accidents, is suicide. Each year 6,000 teenagers use a gun, pills, or some other means to kill themselves. Every 90 minutes a teen commits suicide. Every day 1,000 more will attempt it. Teen suicides jumped 256 percent from 1900 to 1983 and tripled between 1976 and 1986.
- Apathy and rejection reflected in our adolescent and post adolescent society are the major contributing factors to the increase in suicides and attempted suicides in the United States.
- School stress in Germany and Japan is the reason most given for teenage suicides in those countries.
- Childhood burnout has become a problem for increasing numbers of middle grades students. Students pushed to read early, participate in social events before they are ready and pressured by parents to perform in sports and music at early ages often seek to regain lost childhoods during the teen years by exhibiting childlike behaviors.

The Physical Health of American Youth Is Still Not Good

- Although there has been a massive governmental investment in health care service, about 20 percent of American youth between the ages of 7 and 11 have serious health problems. Many children do not receive proper health care.
- The puberty growth spurt requires an increase in quality food. The diet of teenagers is poor. Surveys show one-half of all middle and high school students don't eat school lunches.
- Gym and health classes for pre-and early adolescents have declined in the past five years. The average adolescent spends six hours daily sitting in front of a television set.
- The average age of beginning smokers dropped from 14 to 10 in the last decade. Sixth-graders need help to resist pressure to smoke. Studies show that special programs where high school students learn to say no to smoking reduce the numbers of smokers.

Alcoholism Among Teenagers and Pre-Teens Is Increasing at Alarming Rates

- Alcoholism among teenagers increased 800 percent in the last decade....
- Children of alcoholics have a 25-30 percent greater chance of becoming alcoholics themselves. This means 7-14 million children may develop alcoholism if the commonly estimated figure of 10 million adult alcoholics is used.
- By the end of high school one in 10 students will suffer a serious drinking problem.

More Youth Are Sexually Active at Earlier Ages

- In 1985 1 million teenagers became pregnant. The percentage rate of those under the age of 15 is beginning to exceed that of late teens. If present trends continue, 30 percent of today's girls will be pregnant by the age of 20.
- 82 percent of teen mothers were the children of teen mothers.

- The rate of child abuse among teenage mothers is especially high due primarily to the immaturity of the mothers.
- Teenage childbearers cost the nation \$16.6 billion in 1986.
- 9 years of age is legally considered to be the beginning of childbearing age in most states. Girls' ages of menarche range from 9.1 to 17.7 years. Twenty-five percent of babies born with birth defects are born to adolescent mothers.
- Two-thirds of teenage marriages end in divorce within five years.
- The most frequent reason girls quit school is pregnancy.

Juvenile Delinquency Is a Major Problem in Our Society

- 15,000 murders were committed by teenage boys in 1985.
- Although juveniles (7-18) make up only 20 percent of the population, they account for 43 percent of all serious crimes (murder, rape, robbery). Youth crime is increasing by more than 10 percent a year.
- The peak age for committing violent crime is 14.
- Law education has been mandated for pre-and early adolescents in a number of states.
- Psychologists regard the lack of a stable home as the biggest contributor to delinquency.
- Polls reveal that parents blame themselves for children getting into trouble and not achieving in school but still expect the school to help students overcome problems. (1986, pp. 91-93)

The suggestion in the figures presented by Wiles and Bondi is that the traditional anchors for many adolescent students may no longer be present. Statistics from other sources support this contention. Toepfer states in an article in the March 11, 1987 publication Education Week:

....Recent demographic studies--especially those reported by the education analyst Harold Hodgkinson--- indicate that the structure of the American family is changing radically, Thus, just at the time early adolescents most need family stability, major shifts are taking place.

In addition, these youngsters are under increasing social and emotional pressures. While being called upon to apply their energies to classroom lessons, they face seemingly impossible choices and critical decisions that test their values and ethics....(p. 32)

Recent demographic statistics presented by Hodgkinson illustrate the changing social realities in American society that are now affecting middle grades students:

- + In 1955, 60 percent of American families consisted of a working father, a mother staying at home with 2 or more school-aged children;
- + In 1985, 5 percent of American families consisted of a working father, a mother staying at home with 2 or more school-aged children. (1986, p. 24)

The implications of these changing demographics on the middle grades student become even more significant when combined with additional data on other changes in contemporary family patterns. Hodgkinson found that, of 100 randomly selected school children in 1985:

- + 40 will live with only one original parent because of divorce before age 16;
- + 5 will have their parents separate within the next 5 years;
- + 2 will have one parent die within the next 5 years;
- + 41 will reach age 18 in formerly "normal" family circumstances. (1986, p. 24)

An additional statistic advanced by Hodgkinson on live births during 1985 has profound implications for early adolescents who are attempting to deal with their emerging sexuality:

532,330 births (20 percent of American births 1985) were out of wedlock births and 260,000 of those children were born to mothers who were age 15 or younger. (1986a, p. 24)

It appears that, when early adolescents most need a feeling of family and community stability, such stability is not available from the traditional sources. The school, whether it wants the responsibility or not, often is forced to assume the

role of "stabilizer" when the role cannot be provided by the family or community. Should the school be unable to fulfill this role, the consequences are predictable. Rock, Ekstrom, Goertz, and Pollack, in a special paper prepared for The National Association of Secondary School Principals, examined in detail The High School and Beyond data base and found:

Students who later became dropouts differed significantly from students who remained in school.... dropouts:

- had lower test scores and lower school grades
- did less homework
- had lower self-esteem and less sense of control over their lives
- had more disciplinary problems in school
- dated more frequently and spent more time driving and riding around
- had parents who were less likely to know what the students were doing.

The major reasons for dropping out of school, as reported by these individuals in 1982 were: disliked school (33 percent), received poor grades (33 percent), were offered a job and chose to work (20 percent), were getting married (18 percent), and could not get along with teachers (16 percent). Nearly one-quarter of the female dropouts cited pregnancy as a reason for leaving school. (undated, p. 2)

From all the data available, adolescents are in, or approaching, a crisis situation. They are losing their traditional supports--the family and the community. One of the last remaining institutions now available to assist the adolescent is the school. However, to look to schools for the total solution to this critical problem is both unrealistic and unfair. Schools, unfortunately, have their limitations and their constraints. The next chapter examines the educational and other needs of the adolescent student in light of his or her development to determine how schools--specifically, those with adolescents--might better serve the dual mission of helping their students to develop their intellect (cognitive skills and knowledge) and to develop their personal identities (physical, psychological, emotional, and social).

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I'm a teenager -- teach.

I go to your school.

It's not mine, it's yours.

How can I be happy
in someone else's house?

You force me to attend
and live by your rules.

I'm frightened of you, the building,
and the new kids from different schools.

I show off a lot
to make everyone think I'm not scared.

I'm not sure of myself.

There are many questions about me
and hardly any answers.

I am not comfortable with my own body.

Help me, please,
I don't know who I am.

ROBERT A. RICKEN
Love Me When I'm Most Unlovable:
The Middle School Years, 1985

CHAPTER FOUR: EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER NEEDS OF THE EARLY ADOLESCENT

Early adolescence is a unique period in each child's life. It is a time when major changes are taking place psychologically, socially, and physically. Research has shown that the middle grades--generally sixth through eighth--are the most difficult years in the emotional and intellectual development of young people. However, being difficult does not mean to imply being abnormal. Dorman states that:

Adolescence is a normal stage in human development that is no more transitional or pathological than any other stage. Research shows that early adolescence is unique in the rapidity of physical growth and in the confluence of intensive social, emotional, and cognitive changes that occur between the ages of 10 and 15. Possibly the most striking characteristic of the age group is its vast diversity, since growth and change occur at different rates both for each adolescent and among groups of adolescents....Their energy, their questioning, their emotionalism, their silliness, and their desire for meaningful involvement are to be valued as healthy signs of growth, not ignored.... (1984, p. 2)

What needs do early adolescent students have? Students in the middle grades have various needs - some educational; some personal. Several educators, including the chairman of the Middle-Level Education Council of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, believe that the development of the early adolescent in areas other than academics should take precedence:

....while academic achievement is important in middle level schools, preadolescence is primarily a time for experimentation, a time for exploration. (Toepfer, 1987, p. 32)

Toepfer, in a personal commentary on contemporary educational priorities related to the middle grades program, amplifies his concern that the developmental needs of the emerging adolescent, despite their importance, have been largely ignored in the current press for improved academic achievement:

Contemporary infatuation with improving academic performance continues to overlook the affective, self-concept, and self-esteem needs of youth. The national reports have largely lost contact with concerns about the developmental needs of youth. These emphases are almost categorically absent in the literature which has mushroomed since the appearance of A Nation at Risk....

The menu of problems facing today's youth impacts heavily upon character development during the middle level school years, e.g., youth suicide, dissolution of personality, and continued change and fragmenting of the support systems in their lives outside the school. Schools do not create these problems. These problems accompany youngsters to school each day. Educators cope with the manifestations of those problems in school each day before the problems return with students to their homes and communities at the end of the school day. Certainly the myopic emphasis upon academic excellence in current educational reform does not consider that schools ought to deal with the problems of living youngsters face today....

Adult value patterns are largely set during one's middle level school years. (An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level, 1985) The physical, emotional, and social metamorphosis of early adolescence capstones the basic character developed by most humans. Medical, psychological, and neurological data are increasingly defining the uniqueness of this age group from both elementary and high school youth....

Adolescent maturation is facilitated by interaction with elders as well as peers. Almost 30 years ago, Edgar Friedenberg (1959) predicted what would happen as adults increasingly began to withdraw from interaction with adolescents. He accurately identified that this void would be inundated by peer group interactions. Maturation for young adolescents develops from two kinds of interaction. One is with peers and the other is with elders....

Today, most youngsters have less contact with adults out of school than at any prior time in our nation's history. Unfortunately, the only significant adult interactions many middle school youngsters experience are those they have with school adults. This makes the modeling of responsible adult behaviors by teachers, administrators, counselors, custodians, secretaries, and other middle level school adults a critical experience for today's youth. (1987, pp. 3-4)

Dependence upon significant others in order to develop and nurture a healthy image of one's self is a characteristic of all students including those who have special needs. These students include gifted, limited English proficient, disadvantaged, educationally handicapped, and others who account for a significant percentage of the student population. These students, who may require enhanced emotional support, may receive less than other students, because such support is assumed to be

provided through special programs and services. The entire school community must assume responsibility for all students and provide necessary support and guidance based on their individual needs.

Dorman identified seven categories of needs that must be addressed by schools if they are to respond to the developmental needs of young adolescents:

1. **The need for diversity.** it is impossible to think that young adolescents are "all alike." different adolescents need different kinds of opportunities for learning, different relationships with a variety of people, and different opportunities for personal reflection and self-exploration. Diverse opportunities for learning and growing are necessary if early and late developers, concrete and abstract thinkers, and dependent and autonomous youth are to experience healthy development....Individual young adolescents also need varied experiences and people in their lives.

2. **The need for opportunities for self-exploration and self-definition.** If young adolescents are to establish a sense of who they are and what they can do, incorporating not only their new bodies and social roles but also their past and their future, they need time alone to sort out all the changes that are so rapidly occurring....opportunities for self-exploration and self-definition are essential if adolescents are to complete the task of forming a sense of identity.

3. **The need for opportunities for meaningful participation in school and community.** If (adolescents) are to learn independence and responsibility, they need opportunities to take the initiative and to have a meaningful voice in making decisions that affect them. Participation is learned by trial and error.... Young adolescents are trying to figure out their role in family, school, and community.

4. **The need for opportunities for positive social interaction with both peers and adults.** Adolescents look to peers for association, companionship, and criticism regarding their new social roles....Young adolescents also need opportunities to relate to adults other than their parents....They need security and the sense of being liked that comes from positive social interaction with adults. They also need to see the modeling of appropriate social and sexual behavior by adults whom they admire.

5. **The need for physical activity.** Young adolescents need opportunities to vent (their) energy through physical activity of their own choosing and through activities designed to improve muscle and bone coordination.

6. **The need for competence and achievement.** Young adolescents need opportunities to try out their new physical, social, and intellectual abilities and to find out what they can do well....young adolescents are hungry for opportunities to succeed at something. Their faltering self-esteem needs successes to build confidence and a sense of worthiness....It is vital that young adolescents receive recognition for a wide variety of competencies.

7. **The need for structure and clear limits.** Although young adolescents are seeking increased independence and self-direction, they need to know what is expected of them....Young adolescents need to help establish structure and clear limits, so they can learn how to be both free and responsible....At times, when young adolescents' self-esteem is especially weak, they need experiences that are carefully structured to insure their success. (1984, pp. 6-8)

Adolescents also have critical educational needs that must be addressed. High school programs are rigorous educational experiences that require a firm academic footing, particularly in the basic skills areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The middle grades are often the last chance that students have to develop these skills. The consequence of not learning these critical skills is inevitable: another dropout statistic. Johnston, Markle, and Harshbarger articulate in a very clear manner how the problem of school dropouts is linked to the middle grades:

....The evidence suggests that the seeds of dropping out are laid early in the student's school career, and that the pattern of school failure and alienation begins as early as the elementary grades. Without intervention, the kind of intervention that can be provided in the middle grades, the cycle grinds to its inevitable conclusion...another dropout....

Obviously, students who leave school do so because they are, to a large degree, unsuccessful there. Because of the almost total lack of opportunity that awaits them upon leaving school without a diploma, it is possible to speculate on just how deep the alienation from school must be if the drive to escape it remains strong in the face of almost certain unemployment and economic hardship.

The indications seem to be that success or failure in school significantly influences the ways in which students view themselves. Students who experience repeated success in school are likely to develop positive feelings about their abilities, while those who encounter failure tend to develop negative views of themselves. In the light of the influence of the self concept on academic achievement, it would seem like a good idea for schools to follow the precept I saw printed on an automobile drag-strip program:

"EVERY EFFORT IS MADE TO INSURE THAT EVERY ENTRY HAS A REASONABLE CHANCE OF VICTORY."

WILLIAM W. PURKEY
Self Concept and School Achievement
1970

Just as important as the lack of academic success, though, is the evidence which suggests that dropouts, or those in danger of dropping out, have poor school adjustment skills. The conclusion is safely suggested by the large body of evidence pointing to behavioral problems experienced by the potential dropout, acts of hostility toward the school and its employees, and long periods of truancy. At best, school is a thing to be avoided, temporarily, perhaps, until the legal age is reached, then permanently....

Other studies have confirmed that the dropout lacks self-esteem, especially as related to school performance, has generally low feelings of personal efficacy, has a low need for self-development and improvement and lacks a commitment to social values. And while the decision to drop out may occur quite spontaneously, the conditions which precede the decision often persist for many years. Typically, feelings of inferiority are present in the potential dropout for years, and the decision to leave school is made when students can no longer cope with the school environment that has alienated them. (1985, pp. 8-10)

Jane Stern, Director of the Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), in presenting to New York City Schools Chancellor Nathan Quinones the findings of a study entitled Meeting Adolescent Needs: A Study of Four Effective Middle Schools, made the following statement:

The middle school experience is often the precipitating event in school failure. It is at this time that there is an increase in truancy and suspensions: these are the first steps in becoming a dropout. Little attention is paid to this level of schooling despite the problems in teaching this age group. (Improving Middle Schools: What Works, 1986)

Rosenblum and Firestone recently conducted for Research for Better Schools (RBS) an examination of Alienation and Commitment of High School Students and Teachers. While the study did not deal with middle school students and staff directly, the results may well be transferable. The objective of the study was to examine the extent, nature, and sources of alienation and commitment among students and teachers in high school. The researchers who conducted the study put its importance in proper perspective with these comments:

The idea that commitment to an occupation leads to greater interest in staying in the field and greater effort to achieve occupational ends has not been explored extensively in education, although there is evidence for the relationship between commitment and

performance in other fields. As for students, alienation has been found to relate to the poorest of student performances, that is, dropping out. (emphasis added) (1987, p. 1)

The Rosenblum and Firestone study was exploratory in nature. The RBS researchers defined commitment and alienation as follows:

Defining alienation and commitment has held a continuing fascination for students of organizations and occupations....numerous definitions....The common theme in these definitions is the presence or absence of a psychological bond or identification of the individual with the larger system--a bond which, if it exists, takes on special meaning and importance to the individual. In our view, alienation and commitment are the extremes of a dimension....the alienation/commitment dimension. The label, though, is not as important as the dimension's components.

Our expectation is that the level of staff and student alienation and commitment in a school depend in important ways on a variety of school and district conditions that are under control of district policy makers and school and district administrators....For this study, we identified the characteristics of schools in four categories: physical arrangements, formal systems, administrative actions, and teacher or student beliefs. (p. 3)

The results of the Rosenblum and Firestone study indicate that, consistent with existing theory and other related investigations, commitment is not a "monolith"; rather, there are different types of commitment:

We identify three types of teacher commitment: commitment to teaching (focussing on the content area and/or the instructional process), commitment to students, and commitment to place--the school itself. One can be committed to one, two, or all three. Similarly with students, there is commitment to place (coming to school), and/or commitment to learning. (p. 6)

The emerging themes arising from the Rosenblum and Firestone study related to student commitment are:

Peers:

Friendships bring students to school, but the school offers few activities that build on this friendship "draw"

- Career Relevance: Programs where students see a direct connection between school and future jobs motivate students
- High Expectations: Students need and respond to a press for excellence linked to academics
- Respect: Students do not want to be in a place where they feel insulted and treated unfairly
- Tough Love: Students want and need their schools to be orderly places. Students want and need to know the adults in the school care about them as individuals (unpaginated attachment)

In looking at teacher commitment in the three areas of commitment to teaching, commitment to place, and commitment to students, the Rosenblum and Firestone study found the top four factors for each of the three types of commitment to be:

Commitment to Teaching

- Structure for teacher input
- Collegiality structures
- Acceptance by administrator
- Instructional press

Commitment to Place

- Instructional press
- Administrative support for teachers
- Acceptance by colleagues
- Sense of control

Commitment to Students

- Acceptance by administrators
- Structures for teacher input
- Instructional press
- Collegiality structure (unpaginated attachments)

Four other factors that had a lesser influence on teacher commitment were: administrative consistence, bureaucratic or nonbureaucratic orientation, building quality, material adequacy. The emerging themes that are evident in the Rosenblum and Firestone study related to teacher commitment are:

- The positive (or negative) effects of school tradition, history and culture
- The pervasive importance of leadership
- The availability of choice in schools by staff:
 - Staff can either accept responsibility for effective schooling (realize they can make a difference) and use creative problem-solving to address pressing concerns or they can externalize the problem and not accept responsibility for effective schooling ("blaming the system"/"blaming the students.") (unpaginated attachment)

The Rosenblum and Firestone research was done in high schools, not in middle schools. The results, however, appear to have general transferability to the middle grades that are of interest in this paper.

The September 1985 issue of Schools in the Middle: A Report on Trends and Practices makes the point that adolescents, while they may look and at times act as adults, are not yet mature:

Middle level school students are no longer young children. At the same time, these youngsters do not yet have the capabilities as high school learners.... While they may physically look like 16-year-olds, we cannot assume that they can also think like 16-year-olds....Youngsters between the ages of 10 and 14 live through the most serious and traumatic changes that humans experience. The physiological, biological, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of these changes must be addressed....Students need help to resolve both educational and personal problems they face during their middle school years. (pp. 1-2)

Toepfer, in a paper discussing the recent changes in Commissioner's Regulations as they affect the adolescent student, makes the following observations:

Today transescents (middle level school students) are more socially aware and sophisticated than their agemates of a decade ago. However, in most cases their social and emotional maturity has not really increased. When adults are struck by the physically more mature appearance of many transescents today, we must not assume those youngsters also possess equally precocious social and emotional maturity. In fact, the adjustment problems of physically precocious transescents may signal a need for special understanding and help by adults.

Adolescents and adults often assume that all of these "bigger" individuals are ready to take on physical, social, emotional, and intellectual task-situations which are appropriate for adolescents some two or more years older than these precocious transescents We have to recognize that many transescents need greater support from adults as they attempt to deal with these difficult problems which, in earlier decades, were largely experienced by only older and more mature adolescents and even young adults. (1985, pp. 1-2)

What then should be done? The California State Department of Education's report entitled Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools states in its Foreword:

Middle grade students are unique. No other grade span encompasses such a wide range of intellectual, physical, psychological, and social development, and educators must be sensitive to the entire spectrum of these young people's capabilities. For many students the middle grades represent the last chance to develop a sense of academic purpose and personal commitment to educational goals. Those who fail at the middle grade level often drop out of school and may never again have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential....

The most effective instruction at the middle grade level emphasizes academic integrity while making an emotional connection with students....

Between the worlds of the elementary and secondary schools are the middle grades. In these grades, the hopes we have for all students are tested from two directions -- by the students' own maturation and by the demands made on them for academic preparation. The first challenge for schools which enroll middle grade students is to make sure they are "connected" to the goals and purposes of their schools in positive ways, and have an opportunity to increase their self-esteem. Young adolescents become intensively self-conscious and self-evaluative. Middle grade schools must provide students with a caring transition from elementary to high school. The second challenge is to prepare students for academic success in the high school....(1987)

The Preface in Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools graphically accentuates the importance of the educational experiences in the

middle grades:

Middle grade students must experience the meaning of high standards of academic excellence in a school setting which recognizes the importance of personal "connectedness". This concept conveys a special sense of belonging, of being accepted by teachers and peers. The personal connection is critical for students of all ages. It is of special significance in early adolescence because it is in the middle grades that lifelong values begin to be shaped including those that relate to academic achievement and personal commitment to educational goals.

....Nationwide data indicate that 700,000 students drop out of school annually. Unless dramatic changes occur which capture the intellects and emotions of young adolescents, this loss of human potential will continue to intensify. At present, the middle grades represent the last substantive educational experience for hundreds of thousands of students. If students fail to achieve the integration of their personalities and the motivation required to make a commitment to academic values by the end of the middle grades, many will never do so. (1987)

Various educational and child development experts have suggested what schools, particularly those that have middle grades, should do to address the needs of the young adolescent. Wiles and Bondi identify the following as important for the middle grades program:

Physical Development

- Provide a curriculum that emphasizes self-understanding about body changes. Health and science classes should provide experiences that will develop an understanding about body growth. Guidance counselors and community resource persons such as pediatricians can help students understand what is happening to their bodies.
- Adaptive physical education classes should be scheduled for students lacking physical coordination. Equipment should be designed for students in transcence to help them develop small and large muscles.
- Intense sports competition, especially contact sports should be avoided.
- Schedule sex education classes, health and hygiene

seminars for students.

- Provide opportunities for interaction among students of multi-ages, but avoid situations where one's physical development can be compared with others.
- Intramural programs rather than interscholastic athletics should be emphasized so that each student will have a chance to achieve regardless of physical development. Where interscholastic sports programs exist, the number of games should be limited and games played in the afternoon rather than evening.
- The school should provide an opportunity for daily exercise by students and a place where students can be children by playing and being noisy for short periods of time.
- Activities such as special interest classes, "hands on" exercises should be encouraged. Students should be allowed to physically move around in their classes and avoid long periods of passive work.
- Snacks should be provided to satisfy between-meal hunger. Guidance should be provided about nutrition as it applies to emerging adolescents.

Social Development

- Teachers should work closely with the family to help adults realize that peer pressure is a normal part of the maturation process. Parents should be encouraged to continue to provide love and comfort to their children even though they may feel their children are rejecting them.
- All teachers in the middle school should be counselors. Home-base, teacher-advisor house plan arrangements should be encouraged.
- Role-playing, guidance exercises can provide students the opportunity to act out feelings. Opportunities should be provided for social interaction between the sexes--parties, games, but not dances in the early grades of the middle school.
- Set up an active student government so students can develop their own guidelines for dress and

behavior. Adults should be encouraged not to react in an outraged manner when extreme dress or mannerisms are displayed by young adolescents.

- Activities should be planned to allow students to engage in service activities. Peer teaching can be encouraged to allow students to help other students. Community projects such as assisting in a senior citizens club or helping in a child care center can be planned by students and teachers.
- Flexible teaching patterns should prevail so students can interact with a variety of adults with whom they can identify.
- Large-group activities rather than boy-girl events should be scheduled so students can interact with friends of the same or opposite sex.
- The middle school should provide opportunities for students to accept more responsibility in setting standards for behavior. Students should be helped to establish realistic goals and should be assisted in helping realize those goals.

Emotional Development

- Sarcasm by adults should be avoided. Students should be helped to develop values in the solution of their problems.
- Socio-drama can be utilized to enable students to see themselves as others see them. Readings dealing with problems similar to their own can help students see that many problems are not unique.

Intellectual Development

- A variety of approaches and materials in the teaching-learning process should be utilized.
- The middle school should treat students at their own intellectual levels, providing immediate rather than remote goals. All subjects should be individualized. Skill grouping should be flexible.
- Physical movement should be encouraged with small-group discussions, learning centers, and creative dramatics suggested as good activity projects. Provide a program of learning that is exciting and

meaningful.

- Organize curricula around real life concepts such as conflict, competition, peer group influence. Provide activities in both formal and informal situations to improve reasoning powers. Studies of the community, environment are particularly relevant to the age group. (1986, pp. 84-87)

The Center for Early Adolescence, in a publication for parents entitled School Environments for Young Adolescents: What Parents Should Look For, talks directly to the idea of successful schools for adolescents:

We cannot expect young adolescents to shed all their excitement and confusion about these changes (occurring during adolescence) at the school door as they enter. No school is successful if its students are not learning, but **academic effectiveness is not enough** (emphasis added). If a school is to be successful, it must make decisions and plan programs that take into account the nature of its young adolescent students....

It is not the school's sole responsibility to meet all (the) needs (of the adolescent). That responsibility also lies with the family and the community. It is the school's responsibility to create a healthy environment where youth can learn and enjoy learning.

Successful schools for young adolescents have created healthy environments where students learn the "basics," learn how to think for themselves, have opportunities to succeed in a variety of ways, learn about themselves and others, and enjoy school and learning. (undated, p. 2)

Dorman, Lipsitz, and Verner believe that schools can respond to the seven developmental needs of young adolescents. They have identified:

1. **Diversity.** Schools can match the varied abilities and interests of students with an equally diverse educational environment through a variety of teaching styles, methods, and materials; a curriculum with a balance among core and high-interest exploratory courses; and flexible scheduling that mixes short and long periods based on the nature of the task and the maturity level of the students.

2. **Self-exploration and self-definition.** Schools can help students to integrate their developing capabilities, interests, and relationships into a sense of who

they are by focusing units in courses in these areas....

3. Meaningful participation in their schools and communities. Student-initiated study and activities, student councils and committees, and school improvement projects such as designing and constructing recreation areas or learning resources are only a few ways schools can engage students in these areas....

4. Positive social interaction with peers and adults. Because of their changing relationships with adults, especially parents, and the increasing importance of peers, positive social interaction with these groups is extremely important to young adolescents. Schools can encourage peer interaction by offering small-group learning activities and by providing space for small groups of students to informally congregate. Positive social interactions between adults and students are facilitated by advisor-advisee relationships, staff participation in activities and informal contact outside the classroom.

5. Physical activity. Responsive schools provide structured outlets for the physical energy of young adolescents, rather than ignoring or trying to suppress it. Noncompetitive physical education is an integral part of the curriculum and physical activity can be encouraged during breaks and lunchtime. Teachers can also provide opportunities for students to move around the classroom.

6. Competence and achievement. Schools can meet these two needs by emphasizing academics, high-quality instruction, positive expectations of all students, generous (but honest) rewards and praise, and opportunities for increased independence and responsibility. A variety of teaching methods and a balanced curriculum of basic subjects, high-interest exploratory courses, and extracurricular activities help provide a diversity of rewards so that each student can be successful at something.

7. Structure and clear limits. Schools that are responsive to the young adolescent's need for structure have clearly stated rules and expectations that are generally accepted and understood by students and staff members. One way of assuring acceptance is to involve students in the establishment of rules and the consequences of failing to observe them. Young adolescents need the security provided by clear limits in order to learn and grow during a time of rapid and

pervasive change. However, schools should avoid rigid structure and excessive limits because they invite dependency, hostility, withdrawal, and rebellion. (1985, p. 46)

Recent research conducted by Gadwa and Griggs strongly supports the idea that those people responsible for the middle grades must be aware of the various needs and motivations of the emerging adolescent, particularly those at risk of dropping out. The two researchers studied dropouts and found that these students:

- were motivated to learn.
- were strongly peer and teacher oriented but also preferred variety in the learning environment.
- required mobility and were unable to sit still for long periods of time.
- were easily bored by daily routines and highly structured learning requirements.
- preferred evening as the optimal time for learning and had difficulty functioning well during the morning hours.
- viewed tactile, kinesthetic and auditory perceptions as the strongest modalities in the learning process.

Clearly, contemporary school practices do not accommodate all of these preferences, and if the potential dropout views the rewards of schooling as minimal, the motivations to accommodate himself to the demands of the school are equally minimal. (Johnston, Markle, and Harshbarger, 1986, p. 11)

Regarding the provision of special education, remedial education, and programs for students with limited English proficiency, educators must be sensitive to actions which may promote negative social comparisons. The school atmosphere should reflect a sensitivity to and an understanding of the wide range of individual differences of students.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals believes that middle schools have six basic functions:

1. **integration.** The school program should combine a solid developmental program in all skill and content areas with opportunities for remediation, and the integration of intellectual and social skills into the students'

repertoire of learning behavior.

2. **exploration.** Adolescents experience serious and traumatic changes. These changes--in the physiological, biological, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions--need to be addressed through an exploratory program. The courses would allow the students to explore their needs, interests, talents, etc.
3. **guidance.** This function helps students make intelligent decisions about present and future educational and prevocational choices. Of all students in elementary and secondary education, adolescents are the ones who most need help to resolve both educational and personal problems they face.
4. **differentiation.** The abilities of adolescents vary greatly. The school program needs to address this variance in a constructive manner that facilitates the adjustment, both educationally and personally, of the emerging adolescent. Information and content must be presented in many different ways to accommodate the differences in students.
5. **socialization.** Students in the seventh and eighth grades are in transition--they are in the process of "becoming", becoming adults. Youngsters need social interaction with each other and with adults to gain the social maturity and self-identity to deal with their physical growth and transformation toward biological adulthood. In addition, the school must help early adolescents learn social skills to communicate and interact effectively with a wide range of people. These skills will be needed to deal with the diverse issues that they will continue to face throughout their lives.
6. **articulation.** Articulation refers to the link between elementary school and high school. Articulation seeks to minimize gaps and overlap in program and learning expectation as students move from one school unit to the next. (Schools in the Middle; A Report on Trends and Practices, September, 1985, pp. 1-4)

The National Association of Secondary School Principals' Committee on Middle Level Education indicates that effective middle level schools share the following characteristics:

- They continue a strong program of instruction in the basic subject areas.

Closely related to the notion of freedom of choice is the idea of freedom from threat. Children seem to learn and develop best in an atmosphere characterized by much challenge and little threat.... In fact, some students fear failure so much that they avoid achievement whenever they can and, when they cannot, do not try to succeed. In this way, they can avoid the task of trying to achieve.

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- They offer a variety of choices and decision-making experiences.
- They recognize that the change from concrete to abstract reasoning is a natural part of human development which generally occurs during early adolescence, and ensure that the curriculum is particularly sensitive to the need for learning experiences which accommodate this transition.
- They provide a staff trained in working with early adolescents and committed to this age group.
- They ensure an articulated program that provides smooth transition of students from the elementary school to the high school.
- They actively promote close cooperation between parents and staff.
- They recognize the vast differences that exist among these youngsters and provide ways to accommodate and even to prize these differences.
- They are sensitive to a youngster's changing need for socialization and independence and provide means for its expression.
- They set up policies which will promote learning, understanding, and the acceptance of authority.
- They acknowledge the action-orientation of these youngsters and provide legitimate means for its expression, including an opportunity for physical activity each day.
- They require students to participate in a wide variety of school-related experiences.
- They encourage students to pursue special interests.
- They provide a wide range of cocurricular and extracurricular activities with emphasis on participation.
- They find ways to get the youngsters out into the community and to bring the community into the school.
- They acknowledge that errors and mistakes will be a natural part of the growth process and accept

them as that.

- They include guidance and counseling as an essential part of the program (developmental activities, not only crisis).
- They provide regular evaluation of the total program's effectiveness.

....Basically a good school in the middle should be concerned with the social and emotional growth as well as the physical and intellectual growth of middle level youngsters. (On the Threshold of Adolescence: A Statement on Schools in the Middle and the Students They Serve, undated, pp.2-3)

Toepfer is direct in his assessment of the role of the school in the middle when he writes:

The middle school should allow--even encourage--its students to try an industrial arts or crafts class, to investigate a foreign language or public speaking, to test their interest in the arts. It is certainly not a time to mandate the same rigid schedule for all students. To do so cheats these youngsters out of the experience they need to make informed choices about their futures. (1987, p. 32)

The California State Department of Education's 1987 report, Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools, contained 22 recommendations, several of which are listed here:

- **Core Curriculum** - Every middle grade student should pursue a common, comprehensive, academically-oriented core curriculum...

The content of core curriculum subjects must be linked to the heightened curiosity of young adolescents about themselves--who they are, how they fit into the world around them, how that world functions, and what exciting prospects for their lives lie beyond the immediate horizons of their present knowledge and experience.

Educators must help middle grade students wrestle with answers to these questions. Young adolescents must learn to draw upon the vast reservoir of accumulated knowledge available to them and to see its meaning for the dynamic, rapidly changing

world which they are about to inherit. Unless this connection occurs in the middle grades, students risk trivial, superficial responses to the personal challenges which they will encounter throughout their lives. (pp. 2-3)

- **Knowledge** - Every middle grade student should be empowered with the knowledge derived from studying the ideas, experiences, and traditions found in the core, elective, and exploratory curricula.

Young adolescents have a natural curiosity about the world in which they live. They must have multiple exciting opportunities to explore this world through exposure to ideas, experiences, and traditions....

Middle grade students need opportunities to explore the wide range of academic interests which are beginning to attract them. Their emerging capacity for abstract thought allows them to have insight into the magnitude of knowledge existing beyond their immediate experiences.

Paralleling the core curriculum are two essential types of curricula which should be available in the middle grades. The first type encourages students to pursue individual interests....

The second kind of curriculum is exploratory in nature....

However implemented, elective and exploratory curricula are for all students in the middle grades. No student should be deprived of the intellectual stimulation found in pursuing areas of special interest or in exploring new categories of information and knowledge. (pp. 8-10)

- **Thinking and Communication** - every middle grade student should develop the capacities for critical thought and effective communication.

Students in the middle grades experience a rapid unfolding of their intellectual capacities. There is a dramatic emergence of the ability to think reflectively--to

think about thinking. This ability opens the way for more complex and abstract thought processes....

These capacities must be matched educationally by curricula and instructional practices which demand both thought and thoughtful communication in the classroom....

Young adolescents are excited by "thoughtful" classrooms....

By emphasizing inquiry into ideas and concepts, young adolescents can engage this imagination directly. This step enables students to make sense out of the vast array of facts with which they are constantly bombarded....

Students whose academic experiences uniformly reflect a monotonous daily preoccupation with lower-order intellectual tasks are currently swelling the tide of dropout statistics...(pp. 13-15)

- **Character Development** - Every middle grade student should be helped to personalize ideals and to develop the ability to make reasoned moral and ethical choices. (p. 20)

- **Learning to Learn** - Every middle grade student should develop a repertoire of learning strategies and study skills which emphasizes reflective thought and systematic progression toward the goal of independent learning.

Learning in the lower elementary grades is heavily structured for students by their teachers. In high school, and beyond, students are expected to play a progressively more significant role in structuring their own learning. In the transitional middle grade years, students require instruction in how to learn--how to bridge the distance between highly structured learning environments and those which increasingly move them toward the ideal of independent learners. (p. 24)

- **Instructional Practice** - Instructional practice should emphasize active learning strategies which are consistent with the goals of the core curriculum and

the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.

....In order to be successful, instructional practices must be appropriate to the structure and substance of varied subjects and the developmental characteristics of students....When either is missing, the connection is broken between students and the curricula; the primary mission of the school is compromised.

The characteristics of young adolescents are too often interpreted as obstacles to learning. When this happens, instructional practices can fight the restless energy, fascination with peer culture norms, and curiosity about themselves and their world which are typical of middle grade students. The consequences can be destructive--even tragic--in terms of wasted human lives....

Middle grade students are especially responsive to combinations of tactile, auditory, and/or visual instructional modes. All learners need to have ample opportunity for hands-on activities. Many students will not learn well if forced to rely solely on one instructional strategy. (pp. 35-36)

- **Academic Counseling** - Every middle grade student should have timely information about the relationship between the curricula of the middle and secondary grades and should be provided access to the opportunity to prepare for the broadest possible range of academic options (curriculum paths) in high school. (p. 48)

- **Equal Access** - Every middle grade student should have access to the most advanced levels of curricula offered during each of the middle grades; this opportunity should be facilitated through educational policies and practices which make the highest level of content mastery a valid and obtainable goal for vastly increased numbers of students.

The principle of equal access dictates that all students must be provided the opportunity to master the most advanced curricula offered during each of the middle grades....

The urgency attached to the goal of equal access provides strong motivation to

educators to introduce more individualized instructional practices in heterogeneously grouped classes. Curricula can be organized to emphasize units of study designed around content goals common to student assignments rather than around other learning outcomes which distinguish--even alienate--students from each other. This approach contrasts sharply with instructional practices that are organized around basic skills mastery which only emphasize and exaggerate student differences. (pp. 55-57)

- **Student Diversity and Underrepresented Minorities-** Every underrepresented minority middle grade student should receive encouragement and incentives to pursue academic and occupational goals.

Middle grade students must be challenged to achieve cultural, scientific, and mathematical literacy through core curriculum studies. These studies have the potential to unlock unlimited futures for students irrespective of ethnic and linguistic differences, handicapping conditions, gender, or socioeconomic variables....

The middle grades represent the critical juncture. New ways must be found to interest, excite, challenge, and reward young adolescents from underrepresented minorities. They must be helped to focus their attention on positive academic values and their corollaries of higher education and upwardly mobile careers. (pp. 59-60)

- **At-Risk Students -** Many middle grade students are "at risk" of dropping out of school; they should have access to educational programs which emphasize personal commitments to academic achievement.

The term "at risk" has emerged in the American press as a shorthand expression for students who, although still in school, are up for grabs. For whatever reason these students are not connected with the purposes of the school. They have not identified sufficiently with its values and are at risk of becoming dropouts....

Early adolescence represents the most critical period in the education of students.

Although at risk, most of the identifiable potential dropouts are still in school during the middle grades. There is still hope for them. In practical terms, large numbers of other middle grade students are also at risk. Early adolescence is a volatile time. Intense physical, psychological, social, and intellectual changes mean that few students escape unscathed....

For many students, the middle grades may represent their last substantive educational experience. As noted earlier, the dropout statistics accelerate rapidly during the early years of high school. A solid philosophy of middle grade education can blunt these statistics and move large numbers of at-risk or potentially at-risk students into the future with a spirit of courage and hope. (pp. 65-68)

- **Physical and Emotional Development** - Many middle grade students require specific primary health care services and strong counseling and guidance programs in order to concentrate their intellectual abilities on academic goals. (p. 71)

- **School Culture** - Every middle grade student should experience a positive school culture which reflects a strong, student-centered educational philosophy.

The concept of school culture relates to the quality of the school environment which students experience daily....It also includes the degree to which students have the opportunity for their personalities and abilities to unfold under the sensitive care of individuals whose commitment evidences the highest levels of professional-client relationships. (p. 80)

- **Extracurricular and Intramural Activities** - Every middle school student should have access to extracurricular and intramural programs which develop a sense of personal connectedness to school through activities which promote participation, interaction, competition, and service.

Participation in extracurricular and intramural activities helps many students, who otherwise experience difficulty in identifying with the academic goals of

school, to achieve a sense of "connectedness"
....For students who are successful
academically, involvement in school sponsored
....activities is also very important. (p.
85)

- **Student Accountability** - Every middle grade student should be accountable for significant standards of academic excellence and personal behavior.

Middle grade students must experience a schoolwide commitment to high standards of academic excellence and personal behavior. Efforts to legislate these qualities through complicated and often arbitrary rules, regulations, threats, and punishments are in most cases singularly unsuccessful. A far more powerful strategy is found in the use of modeled behavior by teachers and principals who define the tenor and quality of academic expectations and personal behavior through their daily interactions with students and each other....

The relationship between high standards of academic excellence and equally high standards of personal behavior is immediate and direct. When faculties reach out to students with energy, excitement, respect, and creativity, the basis of student accountability for academic excellence and personal behavior becomes visible, symbolic, and powerful in its consequences. (pp. 87-89)

- **Transition** - Every middle school student should experience a successful and positive transition among elementary, middle, and secondary levels of school organization.

The middle grades are "the in-between years". They serve as a vital link between childhood and older adolescence which tapers into young adulthood by the time of high school graduation. The philosophy of middle grade education must, of necessity, deal with the complex interrelationships between intellect and emotions....

It is essential to put the emotional and social aspects of transition among different

levels of schooling into perspective as a prelude to discussions of academic transition. While the academic mission of schools is the predominant concern of educators, young adolescents will respond to that priority in direct proportion to the ability of the school staff to ameliorate their emotional and social anxieties....

The dependent learner of the early elementary grades becomes the independent learner who moves more surely and confidently into high school. The middle grades broker this transition through their special provision for the intellectual, emotional, social, and physical needs of pre and early adolescent students. (pp. 91-96)

- Structure - Middle grade education should be identified with grades 6, 7, and 8.

The identification and organization of the middle grades in terms of schools enrolling students in grades 6, 7, and 8 are recommended for the following essential reasons:

- Developmentally, students in grades 6, 7, and 8 have more in common....than do those in other age-grade combinations.
- Fifth grade students typically have not yet crossed the threshold of early adolescence. Their developmental readiness is more closely linked with students in grade 4.
- Ninth grade students tend to identify emotionally and intellectually with students in grades 10 through 12.
- The organization of secondary curriculum sequences logically follows a four-year pattern and corresponds to the needs of students to satisfy college entrance requirements.
- A three-year middle grade time frame allows the opportunity for strong, positive relationships to be built....
(p. 98)

● **Scheduling: An Expression of Middle Grade Philosophy** - The school schedule for the middle grades should be a direct reflection of a sound educational philosophy and should facilitate equal access by all students to the full range of instructional programs and student support services.

The most basic expression of a school's philosophy is found in its master schedule. Profound and noble expressions of educational goals and commitments can be compromised--even abandoned--when the master schedule fails to respond creatively to them.

The master schedule must facilitate every student's ability to realize the full benefits of a school's program....(p. 106)

Dorman has captured, in two short paragraphs, the needs of adolescents and a possible school response that addresses these needs:

Young adolescents are attempting to understand their developing physical and intellectual capabilities, their changing social relationships, and their diverse interests and concerns. They are also trying to integrate all these changes into their past, present, and future in a way that makes sense to them and establishes who they are. It is impossible for young adolescents to separate themselves from this task when they enter a school environment. Schools that expect them to do so will probably not be healthy environments or academically effective schools.

Responsive schools consider the young adolescent as a whole person and recognize that young adolescents learn better in an environment which takes them into account. Responsive schools also recognize that the unique characteristics of adolescence provide rich resources for learning and motivation to learn, and tap these resources within young adolescents. (1984, p. 10)

Fenwick, in The Middle School Years, echoes Dorman's words and argues for a professional response by educators to meet the needs of their adolescent charges:

Psychologists tell us that the traumas of the adolescent years tend not to be taken too seriously by adults--teachers included. Failure to do so lies at the root of some of the most serious interpersonal conflicts that involve fractured relationships among

both students and teachers. These may have crippling, even tragic consequences. While violence, per se, is the exception, the damage to personality development through warped values, and academic failure have the potential ultimately to exact a bitter price from the individual and society. The transition to adolescence represents a genuine period of danger physically and emotionally for youth. Accidental death, suicide, drug abuse, and crime are statistically disproportionate during the teen years. Psychologists observe that normal, healthy adolescents are, by adult standards, variously manic, depressed, and even psychopathic in their behaviors as they confront turbulent, shifting, and often conflicting emotions and events in their lives. It is unconscionable professionally to ignore these facts. One cannot pretend that educational excellence can be achieved in an academic setting that dismisses the impact of adolescent traumas as little more than emotional trivia to be tolerated until they somehow go away.

....Many educational sociologists consider the middle grade years to be the most complex social period in the life of an individual. Rapid physical, emotional, and intellectual changes plus an intense preoccupation with questions of personal identity, peer group expectations, and normative values represent compelling challenges.

Recognition of the reality of the threats which students experience is vital. Diminishing these threats is essential. Students should not live in fear--whether of academic failure, low self-esteem, social isolation, or physical harm. This is an absolute in terms of administrative priorities. (1986, p. 28)

Fahs reports on a study conducted in an inner-city intermediate school in New York City with approximately 423 students in the 1984-85 school year to examine the students' coping processes in relation to stressful academic and social events in the school environment. She concludes her report with the following:

I believe that we must begin to pay attention to what students are telling us about themselves and their peers. These students seem to be telling us that they need help in negotiating the social as well as the academic aspects of school--and that the social structure of school must change to accommodate their developmental needs. (1987, p. 12)

Meeting in the Middle: Directions in Schooling for Young Adolescents states in clear and concise language the contemporary challenges facing middle grades educators:

Clearly, the problems of adolescents are diverse and cut across all socioeconomic levels. The problems converge in school....adolescence is a time of change, unique in its physical and social processes....The complexity of (adolescent) needs poses special problems. The adolescent is a child in flux, coping not only with maturing cognitively, biologically, and socially, but with the onset of these changes coming at different rates.

Early adolescence presents extraordinary challenges to the educational community. (1987, pp. 2-4)

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....students' difficulties in basic academic skills are directly related to their beliefs that they cannot read, write, handle numbers, or think accurately, rather than to basic differences in capacity. In other words, many students have difficulty in school not because of low intelligence, poor eyesight, poverty, or whatever, but because they have learned to see themselves as incapable of handling academic work or to see the work as irrelevant to their perceptual worlds.

WILLIAM W. PURKEY
Self Concept and School Achievement
1970

CHAPTER FIVE: PART 100 OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER

In 1984, the Board of Regents promulgated a new Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner. The new Regulations clearly specified the course of study for the middle grades:

- Public school students entering grade 9 in 1988 or 1989 will complete at least one unit of study* in a second language at some time during grades kindergarten through nine. Those students first entering grade 9 in 1990 or thereafter will complete at least two units of study in a foreign language.
- Public school students have an opportunity, when appropriate, to take Regents level courses in grade 8 in all or some of the following subject areas:
 - English
 - Social Studies
 - Second Languages
 - Art
 - Music
 - Occupational Education Subjects
 - Regents Mathematics Courses
 - Regents Science Courses
- Students completing grade 8 by June 1986 received instruction in English, social studies, science, mathematics, physical education, health education, visual arts, music and practical arts.
- Students completing grade 8 in June 1987 or thereafter will complete by the end of grade 8 the following:
 - English, two units of study
 - Social Studies, two units of study
 - Science, two units of study
 - Mathematics, two units of study
 - Physical Education
 - Health Education, one-half unit of study
 - Art, one-half unit of study
 - Music, one-half unit of study

* A unit of study is defined as at least 180 minutes of instruction per week throughout the school year, or the equivalent.

- for students completing grade 8 in June 1988 or thereafter:
 - Technology Education, one unit of study
 - Home and Careers Skills, three-quarters of a unit of study
 - Library and Information Skills, the equivalent of one period per week in grades 7 and 8
- Students who score below the designated State reference point on one or more State tests (PEP or competency) will receive appropriate remedial instruction.

The requirements of the Regulations of the Commissioner deal with the academic focus and time allocations of the middle grades instructional program--what is to be taught. Nowhere in the Regulations is there prescribed how the instruction will be delivered. Further, Part 100 of the Regulations has a procedure whereby school districts may request a variance from any of the provisions in Part 100 (except the State testing and examination requirements) to implement a program to provide excellence in education. However, it needs to be noted that the standards specified in Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner are applicable to all students, including those who are gifted, limited English proficient, disadvantaged, and/or educationally handicapped. Therefore, the required academic offerings must be provided to these students.

Appendix A contains the full text of the Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner that pertain to the middle grades.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLEMENTATION OF PART 100 OF THE REGULATIONS OF THE COMMISSIONER IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Information available on how schools in New York State are implementing the Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner in the seventh and eighth grades is limited. What is available is presented in this section.

Information available to the New York State Education Department through its regular data collection procedures indicates that there has been a change in the grade-span of elementary and secondary public schools. As the following chart indicates, from the 1981-82 school year to the 1986-87 school year there has been a decline in the number of K (or first) to sixth grade schools and seventh to ninth grade schools and an increase in the number of K (or first) to fifth grade schools, sixth to eighth grade schools, and ninth to twelfth grade schools:

Grade-Span	1981-82	1986-87
K (or first) to fifth	452	533
K (or first) to sixth	1468	1293
K (or first) to eighth	71	67
sixth to eighth	162	195
sixth to ninth	34	35
sixth to twelfth	16	18
seventh to eighth	120	115
seventh to ninth	211	154
seventh to twelfth	227	219
ninth to twelfth	398	413

In the fall of 1985 the public school enrollment and the racial/ethnic breakdown in the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth grades in New York State were as follows:

Grade	Enrollment	Amer.Indian	Black	Asian	Hispanic	White
6	171,209	.2%	18.2%	3.5%	13.3%	64.8%
7	184,313	.3%	18.6%	3.4%	13.8%	64.0%
8	182,211	.3%	17.3%	3.2%	11.9%	67.4%
9	237,940	.2%	21.0%	3.1%	14.0%	61.7%

Of the 184,313 students in seventh grade, 43,483 (23.6 percent of the student population) received supplemental remedial instruction. Some 32,468 students were in remedial reading programs; 4,027 were in remedial writing; 15,366 were in remedial mathematics programs.

In the eighth grade, 34,163 of the 182,211 students (18.7 percent) received remedial instruction. Some 23,194 students were enrolled in remedial reading programs; 4,984 in remedial writing programs; 12,437 in remedial mathematics programs.

In total, 77,646 students in the seventh and eighth grades participated in remedial education activities in 1985-86. This represents 21.2 percent of all students in the two grades or about one in five.

During the 1986-87 school year, State Education Department staff members conducted a series of day-long planning sessions to assist local school districts in developing comprehensive plans for implementing the new Part 100 of the Regulations. Directors of Guidance, lead counselors and school principals attended the meetings. A total of 214 districts participated. Among the information collected at these meetings were local district plans for implementing the K-9 second language requirements:

Question 1: For the class of 1992 (now in grade seven), identify the grade placement in which you have provided, or will provide, the one unit of second language required by the end of grade nine.

Responses: The 214 districts responded to the above question in the following manner:

- 9 percent of the districts will meet a portion of the requirement prior to grade seven.
- 26 percent of the districts will meet part of this requirement in grade nine. Since it will be September 1988 when students in the class of 1992 enter the ninth grade, these districts have not yet implemented this portion of the new requirement.
- 53 percent of the respondents chose combinations of grades seven, eight, and nine. The combination of grades seven and eight constituted 40 percent of the respondents; grades eight and nine and grades seven, eight, and nine, respectively, accounted for 7 percent and 8 percent of the responses.

I DON'T NEED THAT, MAN!

i
come
in here
every day
and
wham!
i
get
kicked
in the face...
wham!
wham!
again and again!
i
don't
need
that
man!
they
can
take
that stuff
and
shove it!

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

- 35 percent of the districts chose a single grade in which to fulfill the second language requirement - 26 percent chose grade eight; 4 percent each chose grade seven or grade nine.
- None of the respondents plan to provide the one unit of second language prior to grade five.
- 4 percent of the districts are undecided as to how they will fulfill the second language requirement.

Question 2: For the class of 1994 (now in grade five), identify the grade placement in which you have provided, or will provide, the two units of second languages required by the end of grade nine.

Responses: The 214 districts responded to this question in the following manner:

- 9 percent of the districts are undecided as to how they will fulfill this second language requirement.
- 26 percent of the districts will meet a portion of the requirement prior to grade seven.
- 44 percent of the districts will meet part of this requirement in grade nine.
- Combinations of grades seven, eight, and nine constituted 62 percent of the responses: the combinations of grades eight and nine (23 percent), grades seven, eight, and nine (19 percent), and grades seven and eight (18 percent), 2 percent chose various other combinations of these grades.
- 26 percent of the districts chose 10 different combinations of grades five through nine. Grades five through eight (14 percent) and grades six, seven, and eight (7 percent) were the only combinations chosen by more than one district.

As part of the State Education Department's High School Registration process, our staff visited 51 school districts and reviewed their seventh and eighth grade programs. Districts were asked six questions:

Question 1: What effect have the changes in Part 100 of the Regulations had on your staff?

Response: In almost all cases, schools claimed to have hired additional staff to meet the requirements for home and career skills, foreign language and, in some cases, science. In general, district staff felt that the new requirements strengthened the school program. Several school districts, however, responded that the increased emphasis on curricular offerings and the increased remediation requirements tended to limit student access to exploratory programs.

Question 2: What effect has the new Part 100 of the Regulations had on your ability to schedule the seventh and eighth grades?

Response: Almost all respondents felt that the increased course requirements in the seventh and eighth grades greatly inhibited scheduling flexibility. The overwhelming majority of schools use block scheduling for major subjects and several had to limit block scheduling/team teaching activities for middle grades classes. There was strong sentiment that the new Regulations did not take into account the middle school program which was more exploratory in nature than one than focuses on the acquisition of credits towards graduation from high school.

Question 3: What effect has the new Part 100 of the Regulations had on your remediation program in the seventh and eighth grades?

Response: Serious concerns were voiced about the remediation program, since most schools usually provide remediation through pull-out programs rather than through the regular instructional program. Most districts have been able to fit remediation into their program; however, they have lost much of the opportunity to give students time to do individualized learning activities, either in exploratory programs or in study halls. Schools appear to have little opportunity for varied scheduling. Many junior high or middle schools have elected to schedule students enmasse to remedial classes or laboratories.

Question 4: What effect has the new Part 100 of the Regulations had on the academic success of eighth and ninth grade students?

Response: Most districts felt it was premature to assess the academic success of the students in grades eight and nine, since the new Regulations have not yet been fully implemented. There was some sentiment that many students may drop to a non-Regents high school

program instead of continuing with Regents-level courses. Several respondents suggested that the middle school program be allowed to move back to its multifaceted approach, using integrated coursework and block scheduling in the four basic academic areas to meet student academic needs and to cover the requisite number of courses.

Question 5: What effect has the new Part 100 of the Regulations had on the school district's acceleration policy?

Response: Most districts felt that the acceleration requirements inhibited their middle school exploratory approach in that it forced them into more homogeneous scheduling and limited the flexibility in the team teaching block of time scheduled for major subjects. Additionally, many school districts felt they had a clear-cut three-year curriculum in many subjects and by inserting the possibility of an accelerated course, one-third of their carefully developed curriculum would be lost to some students in the middle grades.

Question 6: What effect has the new Part 100 of the Regulations had on the program in your elementary schools?

Response: Generally, the districts felt it was too early to comment on the effect of the seventh and eighth grade requirements on the K-6 educational program. Some school districts hypothesized that the increased requirements at the middle grades level and the increased expectations would lead to a greater emphasis on computer literacy, elementary science and social studies skills as well as to increased writing and reading skills.

In late January 1987, the State Education Department asked the 75 upstate school districts participating in the 1986-87 High School Registration Program to provide the Education Department with a copy of their seventh and eighth grade schedule, their 6 1/2 credit by examination option, and their policy and procedures on eighth grade acceleration. A total of 54 districts responded. A summary of their responses follows:

6 1/2 Credit by Examination Option: Of the 54 districts that responded to the request for information:

- 32 districts use Regents examination score or its equivalent

- 32 districts use a local oral examination process
- 32 districts use a local special project process
- in 31 districts, no students elected acceleration
- 4 districts have no policy options

Eighth Grade Acceleration: Of the 54 districts that responded to the request for information:

Subject	Regents Examination or Occ.Ed. Proficiency	Local Test or Project
Art	1	20
Music	0	21
Foreign Language	27	3
Science	24	0
Mathematics	28	0
English	0	15
Social Studies	0	12
Occupational Education	6	0

Scheduling: Of the 54 districts that responded to the request for information:

- one district uses combination scheduling
- one district uses both combination and block scheduling
- four districts use individual student scheduling
- the remaining districts use block scheduling.

State Education Department staff members collected in May and June 1987 from a small sample (16) of school districts information about eighth grade acceleration, scheduling, second language instruction, and professional staffing. Seven of the districts were rural, 4 were suburban, and 5 were city districts (but none were from the "Big Five" - Buffalo, New York City, Rochester, Syracuse, or Yonkers).

Acceleration: All of the 16 districts offered eighth grade acceleration:

Subject Area	Number of Schools	Number of Schools with Students Accelerating
Art	16	5
Second Language	16	10

Mathematics	16	16
Music	13	2
Science	11	8
Occupational Ed.	8	2
English	4	1
Social Studies	0	0

The reasons given for the small number of schools offering acceleration in either English or social studies were that acceleration would interfere with the existing curricular scope and sequence and that the school did not include grade nine.

Scheduling: None of the 16 schools reported reducing time in courses to provide required remediation. However, scheduling adjustments were more common to accommodate the new requirements of Part 100 of the Regulations. Four schools increased the length of the school day in 1986-87 (the range was four to 51 minutes with a mean of 23.5 minutes). One school reduced the school day by five minutes. Eight of the 16 schools increased the number of periods by one and seven decreased the length of each period (the range was one to four minutes with a mean of 3.4 minutes). The length of periods ranged from 36 minutes (two schools) to 51 minutes (one school). More schools (four) had 40 minute periods than any other. The average length of periods was 40.8 minutes.

Second Language: Following are the schedules for the first and second units of the K-9 second language requirement in the 16 districts:

Grade of 1st Unit	of 2nd Unit	Number of Schools
6, 7	8	9
7	8	4
7, 8	9	3

Staffing: In 1985-86 and in 1986-87, school districts added professional staff in the areas of library media, music, occupational education, science, and second language. Most of the additions were in occupational education and second language.

In the 1986-87 school year, two educational organizations in New York State, the New York State Council of School Superintendents and the New York State School Boards Association, each conducted independent studies of the impact on the middle grades of the new Part 100 of the Regulations of the

Commissioner. The Curriculum and Instruction Committee of the New York State Council of School Superintendents surveyed all New York State school districts. Approximately 60 percent of the districts completed and returned the survey with extensive written comments. The most troublesome areas identified by the respondents were the scheduling and curricular implications of eighth grade acceleration and the second language requirement. The written comments indicated serious philosophical and learning issues as related to middle school education, inclusion of foreign language, stress and potential for increased dropouts among students already at risk. There was no significant difference between small (less than 600 students) and large (more than 1000 students) schools in terms of the identification of the major troublesome areas.

In May of 1986, the New York State School Boards Association conducted a statewide survey to assess the impact of the new Part 100 of the Regulations on the middle grades. Approximately 54 percent of the districts responded. The results of this survey are contained in their entirety in Appendix B.

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a good word for folks who Make Bad Grades

I would like to say a good word for folks who
dont make good grades.

And since you asked, what I dont like about
school is the way teachers treat you like your
dumb or crazy. A lot of great people was
tho't to be dumb or crazy. In fact you almost
have to be crazy to ever do something great.

I would rather be great than make a lot of
good grades.

P.S. Thank you for letting me say a good
word for folks like me who are really ok.

P. C.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

CHAPTER SEVEN: WHAT IS AND WHAT SHOULD BE

Recent events in American education have drawn renewed attention on the middle grades and the adolescent student. More and more research is now being conducted on emerging adolescents and the schools that serve them. The questions of what is and what should be are the focus of this current research.

What Is. Two studies, in addition to the year-long review conducted by the California State Department of Education, have been undertaken recently. They center on middle grades education in states other than New York State and provide important background information on what is happening in seventh and eighth grades nationally. One study was done in Michigan by the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; the second was done by the Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at The Johns Hopkins University.

The University of Michigan project was a two-year project that followed 3,000 students in 12 school districts in southeastern Michigan as they moved from the sixth grade to the seventh grade, from elementary school to junior high school. (MacIver, Klingel, and Reuman, 1986; Feldlaufer, Midgley, and Eccles, 1987; Reuman, MacIver, Eccles, and Wigfield, 1987) Student and teacher perceptions of the classroom environment were assessed during mathematics instruction in 117 sixth grade elementary school classrooms and the following year in 138 seventh grade junior high school mathematics classrooms.

The University of Michigan study concluded that when students moved from elementary school to junior high school they were faced with a changing classroom environment, at least in mathematics. First, students were given fewer opportunities to make suggestions regarding what they were to learn and how they were to learn it. Despite the fact that these students were entering puberty and were expressing a desire for more control over their lives and more decision-making power in the classroom, they appeared to receive less of both after the transition to junior high school. Second, there was evidence that classrooms changed in ways that seemed to encourage the use of social comparison and ability self-assessment. The increase in whole class task organization and the decrease in opportunities for cooperative interactions among students made it likely that students would be more aware of and concerned with how they were performing in relation to other students. The study results suggested that use of social comparison increased when students moved to junior high school at a time when children were becoming increasingly self-focused and self-conscious. They were also developing a more differentiated concept of ability in that they no longer equated ability with effort but began to understand the

notion of ability as capacity. For students who did not see themselves as highly able, this combination might well have resulted in lower self-concept of ability and motivation to achieve.

The University of Michigan study also found a change in the student/teacher interaction after the transition to junior high school. Students tended to characterize junior high teachers as less caring, less warm, less friendly, and less supportive than the pretransition teachers. Such attitudes could have had a negative impact on students since the attitudes developed at a time when emerging adolescents had a particular need for positive relationships with adults other than their parents. The implications of this situation for students with disabilities require strategies which eliminate a negative impact on the self esteem of these students.

The University of Michigan researchers studied changes in students' mathematics motivation and behavior at the transition from elementary to junior high school:

When students make the transition from elementary school to junior high school, they normatively experience abrupt organizational changes in their school environment....one important change involves assignment to separate junior high school classrooms on the basis of their past academic performance.... Nationally, the incidence of between-classroom ability grouping doubles--from 20 percent to 40 percent--when students make the transition from elementary school to junior high school.

By examining patterns of change in students' achievement-related beliefs, values, and behavior at the transition to junior high school, and by linking these patterns of change to the new school environments that students encounter, we can begin to understand how school practices impact on early adolescence....(The Michigan study illustrates) how changes in ability grouping practices in mathematics at the transition to junior high school affect early adolescents' motivations. (Reuman, MacIver, Eccles, and Wigfield, 1987, p. 1)

The study measured differentiated components of students' mathematics motivation and behavior: the standards of excellence students use to evaluate themselves in mathematics, fear of failure in mathematics, achievement expectancies, achievement values and effect, effort and performance. Every outcome examined showed highly significant effects related to the transition from sixth to seventh grades. In every case, the change observed was a decline from sixth to seventh grade. Of

particular note was the decline for the personal best standard of excellence, the utility value and intrinsic value students place on mathematics, their free time spent on mathematics games and activities and their self reported level of effort. Reuman, MacIver, Eccles, and Wigfield suggest the following based upon their study:

....We interpret these trends as substantive evidence that students are generally "turning off" to mathematics at the transition to junior high school. Not only do we see declines in factors that would tend to keep students invested in mathematics, we also see declines in factors that might tend to make students withdraw from math activities. It seems as if students increasingly don't care about mathematics as an activity domain. (1987, p. 5)

The University of Michigan researchers summarize the results of their study as follows:

....there may be a developmental mismatch between early adolescents and the classrooms we provide for them in the junior high school, a mismatch that makes these differences between pre- and post-transition classrooms particularly salient and debilitating to some students....(however,) we do not believe that the transition to junior high school need be inevitably difficult or stressful. We suggest that the transition to a facilitative educational environment, even at this vulnerable stage of life, could result in more positive self- and achievement-related beliefs. Unfortunately, the data reported here indicate that the transition to junior high school may often involve a transition to a less rather than a more facilitative environment.

....although students may anticipate that junior high school will be more competitive and require higher level skills and understanding than elementary school, they may find themselves in less exciting, less competitive, routinized classrooms where the completion of lower level tasks....is the norm. This may be particularly true in mathematics, since seventh grade math is often a review of concepts introduced at the elementary level....

....(Finally,) the criteria that teachers use for assigning grades may change, making grading more salient and more strict. There is consistent and compelling evidence that students, on the average, receive lower grades after the transition to junior high school than before....If junior high school teachers are using a stricter standard than elementary

school teachers to evaluate student performance, an additional important influence on student motivation in association with the transition may have been uncovered. (Feldlaufer, Midgley, and Eccles, 1987, pp. 14-15)

The researchers from the University of Michigan concluded from their study that the students in the seventh grade viewed their teachers as less caring, less sympathetic, and less friendly. They hypothesized that this increased impersonalization might be a consequence of the departmentalized nature of the traditional junior high school and also might result in reduced achievement. The information reported by the researchers from The Johns Hopkins University adds credence to this hypothesis.

The Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools at The Johns Hopkins University began in 1986-87 a five-year study of middle schools. (Becker, 1987; Coldiron, Braddock, and McPartland, 1987; McPartland, 1987) During the first year, the researchers' efforts were directed toward describing the characteristics of middle schools. They used as their data base information provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. They found, in their study, that:

- Nationally, the number of preprimary (or first) to fifth grade schools, sixth to eighth grade schools, and ninth to twelfth grade schools increased between 1970-71 and 1982-83. During this same period, the number of preprimary (or first) to sixth grade schools, preprimary (or first) to seventh grade schools, preprimary to eighth grade schools, seventh to ninth grade schools, and tenth to twelfth grade schools decreased. (Coldiron, Braddock, and McPartland, 1987, Figure 13)
- In Pennsylvania, the grade span of the school had a significant effect upon the staffing pattern of the school. For example, in the K to fourth or fifth grade schools, 71.5 percent had self-contained fourth grade classrooms; in K to sixth grade schools, only 45.9 percent had self-contained fourth grade classrooms (44.4 percent were mixed and 9.7 percent were departmentalized). Even more dramatic was the staffing in the sixth grades. In K to sixth grade schools, 41.1 percent had self-contained sixth grade classrooms (44.9 percent were mixed and 14 percent were departmentalized); in fourth or sixth to eighth grade schools, only 1.9 percent had self-contained sixth grade classrooms (64.1 percent were mixed and 34 percent were departmentalized). (Coldiron, Braddock, and McPartland, 1987, Table 6)

It Takes Courage....

It takes a lot of courage for a person to break out of low self-esteem. Even then, it is almost impossible for most to do so without the strong, loving help of someone else.

Some of the students in our schools have been beaten down since they were born - emotionally, physically, and intellectually. They have no inner strength with which to be courageous.

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

- In Pennsylvania, as students progressed through the grades, they:
 - moved from self-contained to departmental arrangements.
 - became the responsibility of more and more teachers.
 - tended to be regrouped more and more.
 - tended to be grouped homogeneously more and more across classes.
 - tended to be grouped within classes less and less by ability. (Coldiron, Braddock, and McPartland, 1987, Figures 1-7)
- In Pennsylvania, students, regardless of their socio-economic status (SES), tended to do better on the sixth grade mathematics, English, and reading tests if they had only a single teacher (a self-contained classroom). The only exceptions to this general trend were slightly positive test responses in English and reading for high SES students with 4 or 5 different teachers. (Becker, 1987, Figure 2)
- In Pennsylvania, in classes organized by student ability, student achievement for the low SES students in reading was significantly lower than for low SES students who were not in classes tracked by ability. (Becker, 1987, Figures 3-4)
- In Pennsylvania, those students, other than the high SES cohort, in grade six who were in an elementary school did remarkably better on the grade six test scores than their equivalents who were in a sixth grade in a middle school. (Becker, 1987, Figure 5)

The researchers from the University of Michigan found several significant declines in teacher attitudes and perceptions. The teachers in the seventh grade had a lower opinion of students' natural mathematics talent, degree of effort, and performance to their capacity. This attitude of lowered expectation demonstrated by seventh grade mathematics teachers has received support from another study of middle schools done by Binko and Lawlor (1986). They found that mathematics, science, and related arts teachers in middle schools tended to organize instruction (content, class, activities, teaching methods) according to what they teach rather than whom they teach. Further, mathematics, science, and related arts teachers indicated that they provided fewer classroom activities tailored to the physical needs of early adolescent youngsters. The teachers in social sciences/ language arts gave more direct attention to the social, emotional, and physical aspects of the middle school environment than did the mathematics or science teachers. They concluded their study with an observation that is

consistent with the findings of the University of Michigan study of mathematics instruction in the seventh grade classroom:

....Our findings indicate less concern by math, science, and related arts teachers for accommodating the special needs of preadolescents and adolescents in a middle school setting....We fail to see evidence of the active, cooperative, team-oriented organization typical of the early middle school movement and which educators in the field say is essential to the functioning of a good middle school. (1986, pp. 85-86)

The data from the studies done by researchers at the University of Michigan, The Johns Hopkins University, and others suggest that the traditional staffing and scheduling configurations associated with the junior high school and the high school--notably the departmentalization and the movement from the child-centered approach of education to the subject-centered approach, with the resultant impersonalization and depersonalization--may have a detrimental effect upon not only the academic development of the adolescent student but also the personal development of that individual. Such organizational and instructional approaches may negatively affect students with handicapping conditions. In addition to the maturational demands of the middle grades youngster, disabled students may need greater adult support in a new environment and, therefore, require greater coordination among their teachers in order to ensure the integration of their regular and special education program components.

What Should Be. Various groups and organizations have suggested what should be in the middle grades. Toepfer offers the following:

To improve the development of more effective instructional programs, middle schools will need to devise procedures which more effectively deal with articulation issues. These procedures must deal with two levels of concern. One involves articulation of middle level school curricula and programs with their sending elementary and receiving high schools. The other deals with articulation of curricula and programs within the middle level school. (1986, p. 9)

The National Middle School Association, in 1982, published This We Believe which reflected the Association's consensus views regarding the essential elements of middle school education:

- the middle school is an educational response to the needs and characteristics of youngsters during transience and, as such, deals with the full range of intellectual and developmental needs.

- young people going through the rapid growth and extensive maturation that occurs in early adolescence need an educational program that is distinctly different from either the elementary or the secondary model.
- existing programs for this age group have all too often lacked focus on transescent characteristics and needs.
- educators, school board members, parents, and citizens generally need to become more cognizant of this age group and what an effective educational program for this group requires.
- no other age level is of more enduring importance because the determinants of one's behavior as an adult, self-concept, learning interests and skills, and values are largely formed in this period of life.
- the developmental diversity of this age group makes it especially difficult to organize an educational program that adequately meets the needs of all.
- the academic needs of middle school students are affected greatly by their physical, social, and emotional needs which also must be addressed directly in the school program.

A "true" middle school will evidence the following conditions or characteristics, called essential elements:

1. Educators Knowledgeable About and Committed to Transescents
2. A Balanced Curriculum Based on Transescent Needs
3. A Range of Organizational Arrangements
4. Varied Instructional Strategies
5. A Full Exploratory Program
6. Comprehensive Advising and Counseling
7. Continuous Progress for Students
8. Evaluation Procedures Compatible With Transescent Needs
9. Cooperative Planning
10. Positive School Climate (pp. 18-19)

Meeting in the Middle: Directions in Schooling for Young Adolescents contains a series of recommendations arising from the comprehensive statewide survey conducted by the New York State

School Boards Association. The suggestions are extensive and deal not only with the middle grades educational program but also with the new Part 100 of the Regulations of the Commissioner. For these reasons, they are reproduced in their entirety as Appendix C.

At the present time, the research in the area of middle grades education provides no clear solution to the problem of middle grades education that is applicable for all students in all situations. The researchers from The Johns Hopkins University have described the present conundrum:

For the past 60 years or more, school administrators and education researchers have discussed the advantages and disadvantages of alternative forms of school and classroom organization for schools serving students during their middle years....

Educators also have tried to balance early adolescent students' developing intellectual needs and their complex psychological needs by the way they recruit and socialize teachers, the way they structure teaching responsibilities, the way they group students among different classes, and the way that teachers group students for instruction within those classes. (Becker, 1987, p. 1)

....Research about the impact of alternative organizational structures has not been clear and consistent. Partly, this may be because an organizational feature may have offsetting advantages and disadvantages for different groups of students....divergent impact of organizational arrangements requires school administrators to recognize that each choice may have costs and benefits for different clientele.

Our data support the importance of considering the differential payoff of alternative arrangements for different groups of students. (Becker, 1987, p. 23)

Coldiron, Braddock, and McPartland offer further explanation of the problems facing middle grades education:

Curriculum requirements and student developmental needs are often in stark contrast at the early elementary grades and late secondary grades and produce different emphases in school practice. Early elementary grades usually emphasize a "pupil orientation" where a teacher feels a primary responsibility to establish a thorough understanding and close supervision of the needs and interests of

each individual student under the teacher's charge. Late secondary grades usually encourage a "subject-matter orientation" where a teacher takes responsibility for being an expert in particular curriculum subjects and for developing an instructional program that encourages student learning in the subject area. To be sure, good schools can be assumed to establish a balance at each grade between practices focusing on individual student development needs and on curriculum requirements. (1987, pp. 3-4)

All students must receive the benefit of such balance. For students with special needs, this requires increased expectations for subject matter acquisition. If expectations for middle grades students are lowered, the perception of the ability of students from special populations could be reduced even further. Positive outcomes for students with special needs are possible when these students are challenged and supported by caring educators who stress the development of abilities rather than the limitations of disabilities.

McPartland puts in proper perspective the knotty problem facing educators who must deal with middle grades education:

....There is no single best way to organize a middle school to meet the variety of needs of early adolescent students. This statement takes issue with those middle school educators and organizations who have proposed exact lists of "do's and don'ts" or complete blueprints for designing school organization and classroom instruction for the middle grades.

Instead of specific lists and blueprints...., we need research-based ways of thinking about learning environments for this student age group that clarify how particular school organization features and classroom practices may foster or impede specific learning and human development goals....No single design would be best, because various combinations of organizational and instructional features could be made to work well. Knowledge is needed about the strengths and weaknesses of each feature so particular other features can be added to a middle school design to offer other strengths and compensate for weaknesses in other elements.

....(C)urriculum of the middle grades has moved beyond the elementary school focus on rudimentary mechanics of basic language and computational skills....This requires that teachers have a command of the curriculum content and be able to motivate young adolescent students to participate in appropriate learning

activities.

....(I)nterpersonal relationships are very important for the personal development of early adolescents, especially in their dealings with adults....teacher-student relations during the middle grades must combine adult supervision of each individual youngster with a spirit of adult positive interest and concern that will be felt by each student.

....(T)he organizational approaches that often best address one goal may not have the most positive impacts on the other goal. (1987, pp.1-3)

The results of McPartland's research add credence to the idea that there is no single answer to middle grades education and that any decisions that school administrators make reflect a trade off between positive and negative aspects:

Our findings that departmentalized staffing may weaken teacher-student relationships while strengthening instructional quality does not mean that a school should decide which educational goal is most important...Middle schools must address both goals successfully. Thus, the trade-offs of extreme school staffing practices need to be (a) balanced by some intermediate practice between the extremes, and (b) compensated for by other school practices that address the weaknesses of each particular staffing pattern.

For example,....intermediate staffing practices are frequently found in the sixth grade between the extremes of self-contained classrooms and fully departmentalized staffs. These mixed practices include semi-departmentalized and team-teaching arrangements, where teachers offer instruction in more than one related subject (such as science or math) or share a fixed class of students with other teachers. Such mixed practices often reduce the number of teachers per student to an intermediate number of two or three per student. Such practices may also offer both high quality instruction from subject-matter experts and positive teacher-student relations from teams that establish methods for addressing individual needs of students....

Even when extreme staffing patterns are used, attention can be paid to both goals of teacher-student relations and instructional quality by adding practices that compensate where weaknesses are expected.

For example, a departmentalized program offering high quality instruction in all major subjects can be made to work well for sixth graders if the school recognizes that other actions need to be taken to provide close teacher support and supervision for individual students. Such other actions might include strengthening the role of the homeroom teacher to assume responsibility for the individual needs of the "whole child" in the homeroom class, or assigning to each student a specific adult staff member as "advocate and mentor."

In self-contained classrooms, orientation toward supportive teacher-student relations, inservice activities and specialized support staff could be organized into a program to strengthen instructional quality of teachers who have not been well-trained in subjects such as science or history. In general, school officials who recognize the specific trade-offs in educational goals of their particular staffing practices can then plan actions to minimize the weaknesses.... (1987, pp. 14-15)

McPartland, in discussing the conclusions of his research, summarizes the present situation:

Our findings support the principle that there is no single best way to organize a middle school to meet the multiple educational goals for early adolescents.

....(D)ifferent staffing practices foster goals of positive teacher-student relations versus quality instruction....(P)otential trade-offs in educational goals can be hypothesized for other aspects of school organization, such as scheduling and grouping practices.

Scheduling practices involve whether students remain with the same classmates throughout the day for instruction in the major subjects, or whether students change classmates as they are scheduled for instruction in different periods throughout the day. Grouping practices involve whether between-class tracking and/or within-class ability grouping are used to create homogeneous groups of students on the basis of past performance on tests or in particular subjects....(T)here will be important trade-offs in educational goals from each specific practice that can be addressed by intermediate or compensating practices.

We hypothesize that scheduling practices can affect different dimensions of an early adolescent's

relations with peers. Developmental psychologists have analyzed the importance of the peer group to early adolescent students, and have shown that many youngsters struggle to maintain a balance between finding friendly social support from their peers and developing independent means of withstanding peer pressure. Thus we expect that schools that use block scheduling to retain all-day intact classes will help students establish stable friendship groups, but because students may be dependent on a more limited number of peer contacts they will find it more difficult to take independent actions. On the other hand, students who change classmates continuously throughout the day may be more likely to feel isolated and lack peer support, but at the same time develop greater personal strength to act autonomously. This hypothesis provides another example of a trade-off of effects due to a school organization practice, where the most educationally desirable outcome is a balance between peer group support and independence, each fostered by different extremes of school scheduling. (1987, pp. 16-17)

An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle Level states very clearly what is needed in middle grades education and why:

Schooling is serious business for the early adolescent who must cope simultaneously with a changing self and a changing world. Both need attention or neither will be sufficiently served. We must develop healthy, confident students and equip them with the intellectual skills to succeed in a fast-paced, information society. (1985, Preface)

The young people who leave the middle level schools of the '80s will enter careers, raise families, and seek the satisfactions that life will offer in the third millennium. We cannot even begin to know what information they will need to successfully negotiate that world.

Because we cannot teach them all they need to know, we must teach them how to learn and how to adjust their lives to the changes that will surround them. To do this, we must provide high quality intellectual climates in our middle level schools and foster the development of adaptive skills that our students can use throughout their lives. (1985, pp. 1-2)

High expectations are essential for all students be they gifted, handicapped, disadvantaged, or of limited English proficiency. Educators must be creative in modifying

instructional techniques, strategies, and materials to allow each student to learn, to have high ideals, and to reach for the maximum in a supportive and caring environment.

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. . . What Do You Care?

if	mouth
i come	for
to school	breaking
after	his
my old man	bottle,
just	what
popped me	do
in	you
the	care?

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

CHAPTER EIGHT: ISSUES

The information presented in the previous seven chapters suggests that in many schools middle grade experiences provided students in existing schools may not be best suited to the educational and personal needs of the students themselves. The University of Michigan researchers talk of a "mismatch." The California State Department of Education's study echoes similar concerns. An article in Education Week by Goldberg concisely articulates the issues presented in these two studies:

Both the (California) report and the Michigan findings suggest that improvements in several areas are needed: a less rigorous classroom structure, more independence for students, more sensitivity to adolescent needs on the part of teachers, and more opportunities for "active" learning situations.

....the "notoriously difficult" transition from elementary school to junior high is worsened by the imposition of rigid classroom organization on students just beginning to seek independence.

Both observers and students questioned in the (Michigan) study said junior high school teachers trusted students less and were "more sarcastic, and less supportive than elementary school teachers."

"Unfortunately," the (Michigan) research team wrote, "this lack of emotional support comes at a time when young adolescents have a particular need for positive relationships with extra-parental adults."

Junior high school teachers in the (Michigan) study said they were more concerned with discipline and felt less effective than their elementary school counterparts. (January 28, 1987, p. 8)

The California study recommends that grade 6 - 8 middle schools be established for the adolescent learner. The leader of the Michigan study team states that:

Based on our study, I think (emerging adolescent) students would be better off in K-8 schools because the junior high school environment doesn't seem to be appropriate for this age group. (Goldberg, 1987, p. 8)

Noticeably absent from the recommendations of both the Michigan and California studies is the suggestion that grade 7-8 junior high schools should be endorsed or that the concept of junior high schools should be emphasized.

The studies conducted by the New York State School Boards Association and the New York State Council of School Superintendents also suggest that the requirements of the Regulations of the Commissioner, as they pertain to the middle grades, are such that they limit the ability of school districts to address adequately the unique needs of the emerging adolescent.

The information available on the adolescent learner and on education in the middle grades suggest that the time is here to examine certain issues and assumptions about these middle grades and about the junior high school. The following questions are offered to focus this examination.

- Issue: The Concept and Function of the Junior High School. Does the concept of a middle level school program as a "junior edition" of a high school program still have merit? Should we still be talking about a seventh and eighth grade program that is a mirror of the ninth through twelfth grade program in emphasis and organization?
- Issue: Grade-Level Organization. Will a grade-level reorganization of a district's middle level schools by itself deal with the educational and personal concerns of emerging adolescents?
- Issue: The Mission of the Middle Grade Years. Are the middle grades so distinct in what they must accomplish and who they must serve that they should be viewed in a unique context--neither an elementary school nor a high school?
- Issue: Units and Minutes per Week of Instruction. Are the ideas of "units" and "minutes per week of instruction" appropriate for the seventh and eighth grades, particularly since there is currently no requirement in existing Commissioner's Regulations that mandates that seventh and eighth grade students must pass the required course of study?
- Issue: Summer School Programs. Should the thrust of summer school programs be expanded to include more than just remedial or makeup courses? Might summer schools expand their offerings, on a voluntary basis, to serve students electing acceleration by offering instruction in the content of the course they will miss by accelerating? Might the summer school be used as a place where students can experience exploratory

and enrichment courses, if they so wish?

- Issue: Teacher Preparation and Certification. Should the preparation and certification of teachers working in the middle grades (grades six, seven, and eight) reflect the needs of the students, the needs of the subjects, and the instructional processes that are most appropriate for the adolescent learner?
- Issue: Structure of the Middle Grades. Is it important to examine and redefine the structure (departmentalization, grouping, etc.) of the middle grades? Are there alternative structures (e.g., self-contained, teams, houses, etc.) that could be employed in schools to better meet the educational and personal needs of students?
- Issue: Staff Development. Should the staff involved in the educational program of middle grades students be required to take specific staff development training related to the students in their charge?
- Issue: Support Systems for Middle Grade Students. Is there a need to examine closely the support structures that exist in middle grade schools to help students through the transition from childhood to adulthood (that time called adolescence) and to prescribe more assistance to students in this area?
- Issue: Accommodating Student Diversity and Changing Student Population. Since each student has different needs and different strengths, can schools that contain middle grades do more to accommodate changing student population and the diversity among the student body (e.g., minority students, students with handicapping conditions, students whose first language is other than English, at-risk students, etc.) rather than continue the existing procedures of tracking, departmentalization, homogeneous grouping, and other practices symptomatic of an impersonal education?
- Issue: Administrative Support for Middle Grades Education. Are there existing administrative programs and structures that either support or inhibit the education of middle grades students? Is there a need to modify programs and procedures related to such activities as remediation,

counseling, study halls, electives, etc.?

The issues presented are for discussion purposes only. They reflect recent research concerning middle grade students and are presented in the context of what is best for the early adolescent. A basic question must now be answered.

Is the incongruence that exists between the present school program in the middle grades and the personal and educational needs of the early adolescents in these grades so great that it must be changed?

If the answer is no, there is no need for further deliberations or discussions. If the answer is yes, however, then another question needs attention.

How much change is required to reduce the incongruence that exists now between the school program in the middle grades and the personal and educational needs of the emerging adolescents in these grades to an acceptable level?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

REGULATIONS OF COMMISSIONER

Program Requirements for Students in Grades Seven and Eight

100.4 Program requirements for students in grades seven and eight.

a. Definitions.

- (1) Technology education means a program of instruction designed to develop an understanding of systems in fields such as production, transportation, construction, communications and agriculture by emphasizing applied activities through working with tools, machines and devices used in the home and the workplace.
- (2) Home and career skills means a program of instruction primarily through applied activities designed to prepare students to meet their responsibilities and understand their opportunities as parents or other members of families, consumers, home managers and wage earners.

b. Course requirements in grades seven and eight.

- (1) Students completing grade eight by June 1986 shall receive instruction in English, social studies, science, mathematics, physical education, health education, visual arts, music and practical arts.
- (2) Except as otherwise provided herein, students completing grade eight in June 1987 or thereafter shall have completed, by the end of grade eight, the following required instruction or its equivalent:
 - (i) English, two units of study;
 - (ii) social studies, two units of study;
 - (iii) science, two units of study;
 - (iv) mathematics, two units of study;
 - (v) for students completing grade eight in June 1988 or thereafter, technology education, one unit of study;
 - (vi) for students completing grade eight in June 1988 or thereafter, home and career skills, three quarters of a unit of study;
 - (vii) physical education, as required by section 135.4(c)(2)(ii) of this Title;
 - (viii) health education, one half unit of study, as required by section 135.3(c) of this Title;
 - (ix) art, one half unit of study;

- (x) music, one half unit of study;
 - (xi) for students completing grade eight in June 1988 or thereafter, library and information skills, the equivalent of one period per week in grades seven and eight.
- (3) The requirements for technology education, home and career skills and library and information skills may be met by the integration of the learning outcomes of such subjects into other courses in accordance with the following criteria:
- (i) In public schools, the unit of study requirements specified in subparagraphs (2)(v), (vi) and/or (xi) of this subdivision are met.
 - (ii) In public schools, the subjects of technology education and home and career skills shall be taught by persons certified to teach those subjects.
 - (iii) In public schools, library and information skills shall be taught by library media specialists and classroom teachers to ensure coordination and integration of library instruction with classroom instruction.
 - (iv) In nonpublic schools, the unit of study requirements specified in subparagraphs (2)(v), (vi) and/or (xi) of this subdivision may be met, or their equivalents may be met, by the incorporation of the learning outcomes of such subjects into the syllabi for other courses and/or by appropriate results on examinations which demonstrate student mastery of the learning outcomes of such subjects. The chief administrative officer of nonpublic school shall document the manner in which such nonpublic school has implemented the provisions of this subparagraph. Such documentation shall be in writing and available for review upon request by the commissioner.
- (4) The unit of study requirements for technology education and/or home and career skills included in paragraph (2) of this subdivision may be initiated in grade six, provided that in public schools such subjects shall be taught by teachers certified in those areas.
- (5) Students who score below the designed State reference point on any Regents preliminary competency test, specified in paragraph (d)(1) of this section, or on any fifth- or sixth-grade pupil evaluation program test specified in section 100.2(b)(2)(ii) or (iii) of this Part, may have the unit of study requirements for one or more of their subjects reduced, provided that:
- (i) remedial instruction shall be coordinated with and supplement regular classroom instruction;

- (ii) requirements for subjects set forth in paragraph (2) of this subdivision and for second language instruction set forth in section 100.2(d) of this Part may be reduced but not eliminated. A principal shall consider a student's abilities, skills and interests in determining the subjects for which the unit of study requirements may be reduced;
 - (iii) a student's parent or guardian shall be notified in writing, by the principal, of a school's intention to implement the provisions of this paragraph; and
 - (iv) the exemption shall remain in effect only to the extent that the provisions of subparagraph (i) of this paragraph are being met.
- (6) A student may meet the required half unit of study in music specified in subparagraph (2)(x) of this subdivision by participation in a school's band, chorus or orchestra, provided that such participation is consistent with the goals and objectives of the school's music program for grades seven and eight.
- (7) The half unit of study requirement for health education specified in subparagraph (2)(viii) of this subdivision may be provided in grade six, provided that in public schools such subject shall be taught by teachers certified in health education.

c. Grade eight acceleration.

- (1) No later than September 1986, public school students in grade eight shall have the opportunity to take high school courses in at least four of the following areas: English, social studies, second languages, art, music, occupational education subjects, Regents mathematics courses, Regents science courses. Such opportunity shall be provided subject to the following conditions:
- (i) The superintendent, or his or her designee, shall determine whether a student has demonstrated readiness in each subject in which he or she is to begin high school courses in the eighth grade leading either to a local or Regents diploma.
 - (ii) A student shall be awarded high school credit for such courses only if such student passes one of the following:
 - (a) for credit towards a Regents diploma, a Regents examination, or an occupational education proficiency examination, or, if no such examinations are available, a locally developed examination which establishes student performance at a high school level as determined by the principal; or

(b) for credit towards a local diploma, a locally developed examination which establishes student performance at a high school level as determined by the principal, or for an occupational education subject, the appropriate occupational education proficiency examination, when available.

- (2) Courses taken pursuant to this subdivision may be substituted for the appropriate requirements set forth in subdivision (b) of this section.

d. Required Tests.

At the specified grade level, all students shall take the following tests:

- (1) the Regents preliminary competency test in reading administered in grade eight or nine, provided that students who, in grade six, obtained scores at or above the State median on the pupil evaluation program reading test, or at or above nationwide median on a nationally standardized basic skills reading test administered in grade seven, eight or nine, need not take such test;
- (2) the Regents preliminary competency test in writing administered in grade eight or nine, provided that students who, in grade five, obtained scores at or above the State median on the pupil evaluation program writing test, or at or above the nationwide median on a nationally standardized writing test administered in grade six, seven, eight or nine, need not take such test; and
- (3) the program evaluation test in social studies in grade eight, beginning in May 1989.

e. Remedial instruction.

- (1) Students who score below the designated State reference point on one or more of the Regents preliminary competency tests shall be provided appropriate remedial instruction designed to enable them to pass the Regents competency tests specified in section 100.5(a)(4) of this Part by the time they are otherwise qualified to graduate.
- (2) A student who shall be provided remedial instruction, and the parent or guardian of such student, shall be notified in writing, by the principal, of the test results and the plan for remedial instruction. Such remedial instruction shall begin no later than the commencement of the school semester immediately following the semester in which the test was administered.

Appendix B

NYSSBA 1986 SURVEY ON EDUCATIONAL TRENDS IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

Initial Summary of Findings

The New York State School Boards Association conducted a statewide survey in May 1986 to assess the impact of the Regents Action Plan (RAP) on grades seven and eight to find out how school districts are meeting the needs of adolescents. An eight-page questionnaire and a project goal statement were mailed to superintendents of all New York State school districts with a request that the material be forwarded to the appropriate building principal. Where a district had more than one facility housing grades seven and eight, we suggested that the form should be completed by the administrator of the school considered typical or representative of the district's educational program. Completed forms were returned by 54 percent (382) of the survey population.

The study showed that in order to comply with the Regents Action Plan and Part 100 of the Commissioner's Regulations, districts have had to make changes in most aspects of education in the middle grades, including physical plant, curricular and extracurricular offerings and support services.

Following is a summary of survey results for each of 12 areas reported. Interpretation of findings has been kept to a minimum. For further information about the study, contact the NYSSBA Research Office.

I. Background Information

- Housing of middle grades remains primarily in 6 configurations: 5-8, 6-8, 7-8, 7-9, 7-12 and K-12, with 7-12 as the most popular (29 percent) and 6-8 the second most popular (20 percent).
- From the 1984-85 school year to 1986-87, as the Regents Action Plan has been implemented, there has been an increase in the number of instructional periods from 7 to 8 and a 5 minute increase in the average length of the school day, bringing it to 6 hours and 58 minutes (this includes homeroom and lunch). The average length of an instructional period decreased slightly. Sixteen percent of districts anticipated that Action Plan requirements will make a longer school day necessary by 1987-88.
- Twenty-nine percent of responding districts indicated future changes in their physical plants resulting from RAP implementation. These changes include additional classrooms and room conversions to serve different functions.
- Eighty-two percent of the districts reported that they do not have specific written goals or objectives for grades seven and eight, but subject area goals are used widely.

II. Acceleration

- The average proportion of eighth-graders who will participate in one or more accelerated programs in 1986-87 is 17 percent. In order of importance, the top four criteria used to allow a student to accelerate are teacher referral, grade average, standardized test scores and parental request.
- As a result of acceleration, 69 percent of school districts said they would experience scheduling difficulties. Also, 11 percent cited increased transportation costs, 25 percent foresaw hiring additional teachers and 28 percent said they would have to purchase additional equipment and materials.

III. Home and Career Skills

- This new course requirement is integrated into another course in 15 percent of reporting districts. Most often, it is accompanied by computer instruction, guidance, business, health, industrial arts or home economics. In 30 percent of districts, the course is available to sixth-graders.
- Scheduling difficulties and a need for additional equipment/materials were predicted in 57 percent and 59 percent of districts respectively. Thirty-six percent noted a need for additional teachers.

IV. Technology

- This required course is integrated with another in 11 percent of reporting districts. Science, art, computers, agriculture, industrial arts, library skills and guidance are most often used for this purpose. Twenty-three percent of districts make technology available to sixth-graders.
- Additional equipment/materials were reported as future needs by 71 percent of districts. Fifty-seven percent had had or anticipated scheduling difficulties. Thirty-six percent noted a need for additional teachers.

V. Second Language

- During 1985-86, the three most frequently offered second languages in grades seven and eight were French (77 percent), Spanish (76 percent) and Latin (18 percent).
- Thirty-four percent hired additional foreign language teachers in 1985-86, and 43 percent anticipated additional hirings for 1986-87.
- Second language instruction is offered to elementary students in 16 percent of the districts responding, and another 9 percent indicate it will become available.
- Scheduling difficulties and a need for additional equipment/materials were predicted in 57 percent and 59 percent of districts respectively. Thirty-six percent noted a need for additional teachers.

VI. Music, Art, Health, Library and Information Skills

- New requirements in music and art will present scheduling difficulties according to 57 percent of responding districts. Forty-three percent noted the need for additional equipment and materials, while 28 percent saw the need for additional teachers.
- The half unit of health requirement is available to sixth-graders in 19 percent of reporting districts. It will be available soon in another nine percent.
- Eighty-five percent reported integration of library skills into other courses.

VII. Remediation

- The percentages of students in grades seven and eight receiving remediation has remained fairly constant from 1984-85 to estimates for 1986-87. For grade 7, in 1984-85, the percentages of students in remedial math, reading and writing were 20 percent, 26 percent, and 15 percent respectively. In 1986-87, estimated corresponding percentages were 19 percent, 24 percent, and 14 percent. In grade 8, for 1984-85, reading and writing remediation were given to 18 percent, 23 percent, and 17 percent of students respectively. Anticipated 1986-87 levels were 18 percent, 22 percent, and 16 percent.
- Students who will have a unit of study reduced to accommodate remediation jumped from 5 percent in grade seven in 1985-86 to 15 percent in 1986-87. Grade eight showed a similar jump, from 4 percent to 13 percent in reporting districts. The five areas noted most frequently for reduction were music (20 percent), art (19 percent), second languages (14 percent), home and career skills (12 percent) and technology (10 percent).
- The number of minutes per week a student typically spends in remediation is 130.

VIII. Support Services

- Reporting districts produced an average ratio of guidance counselors to students in grades 7 and 8 at 1:166. The range of answers to this question was particularly broad: from 0 where the school psychologist doubled as counselor, to 1:700.
- Scheduling was ranked as the most important duty of a counselor, followed by communicating with parents, dealing with crises and disseminating career information. Fifty percent reported that the guidance counselor taught the career segment of home and career skills.
- By percentage of districts indicating availability, special services or programs for seventh- and eighth-graders were reported as follows: in-school suspension (78 percent), gifted and talented programs (69 percent), intensive counseling (57 percent), substance abuse counseling (55 percent), alternative education programs (40 percent), peer tutoring (31 percent) and attendance improvement programs (30 percent). Seventeen percent reported adolescent pregnancy programs, and 26 percent reported dropout prevention programs.
- A substantial number of reporting districts planned to establish or expand various support services. Few forecast reduction or elimination of these programs.

IX. Teaching

- Among the respondents, 13 percent noted that teachers are given a formal role in student advisement programs.
- Less than one percent of teachers in reporting districts were teaching outside of their certification areas in 1985-86.
- The interdisciplinary goals of the RAP are achieved by using student projects (69 percent of reporting districts), team curriculum development (58 percent) and inservice education programs for teachers (41 percent).
- Forty-five percent reported inservice programs targeted to help teachers understand and deal with adolescents.

X. School/Community Activities

- Fifty-eight percent of districts reported not having a homework policy.
- Programs to educate parents on adolescent needs were available in 38 percent of responding districts.
- By percentage of districts reporting parental roles, parents participate in schools as committee members (51 percent), classroom volunteers (32 percent), in the Parents as Reading Partners program (20 percent), and in special home-school programs (20 percent).
- School-sponsored community outreach programs were reported in 28 percent of the districts. Programs include student volunteers for community service (19 percent), clean-up campaigns (14 percent), nursing homes (10 percent) and household chores for the elderly (4 percent).

XI. Variances

- Two-thirds of reporting districts determined that they would not need variances for compliance with the Action Plan. Nine percent anticipated applying for a variance or had already applied.
- Reasons to ask for a variance included size of student population, scheduling difficulties and problems with providing required sequences.

XII. Miscellaneous Items

- Districts were asked to identify extracurricular activities offered to seventh- and eighth-graders, and to indicate in each case whether increased or decreased student participation or elimination were anticipated. Results showed that virtually all districts offer some extracurricular activities, with band and intramurals, dances and student councils most prevalent.
- Eight of 10 responding districts reported no decrease in student rate of extracurricular participation as a result of the Action Plan requirements. In nearly every activity, it was anticipated that student participation would increase rather than decrease.
- Electives offered in the seventh and eighth grades: practical math, reading in the content areas, developmental reading, study skills, public speaking, and cartography.
- Two of every three responding districts said they would not eliminate courses in order to implement the RAP; among those who did say yes,

about half had already done so. Some of the courses they planned to eliminate: study skills, developmental reading and writing.

- Twenty-three percent of the respondents had seen increased signs of student stress, attitudinal or motivational problems as a result of Action Plan implementation. Another 21 percent did not respond to this item because they felt it was too early to tell.

New York State School Boards Association.
Meeting in the Middle:
Directions in Schooling
for Young Adolescents,
1987, pp. 20-24

Appendix C

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

(New York State School Boards Association)

- Middle schooling reform must be based on an understanding of the educational implications of early adolescence and the features of successful middle schools.
- Programs in the middle grades should respond to the developmental needs of adolescence.
- To create successful middle school programs, we should borrow from what we know about effective schools in general.
- Districts should develop and adopt policies that clearly state educational goals and philosophy for the middle grades.
- Educational goal-setting for the middle grades must include objectives specific to adolescent needs and expectations for the middle grade experience in the district.
- Attention must be paid at the State and local levels, as well as by the research community, to the transition into and out of the middle grades.
- Instructional requirements placed on districts and students through regulations should be carefully reviewed for their impact on individual school organization and the relationships among schools within the district's organization.
- Any change in organization of the middle grades should be communicated in concise and concrete terms to staff, parents, and students.
- Decisions for change in organization of the middle schools should be consistent with district and school goals and address the individual differences among adolescent learners.
- A district's philosophy of middle school should incorporate principles of instruction based on research findings about the unique needs of adolescents.
- Alternative organizational techniques, including interdisciplinary team teaching, should be explored to facilitate easier transitions in the middle grades, and encourage personalized observation and communication among teachers.
- Programs should be organized in combinations of small and large blocks of time to accommodate interdisciplinary approaches and integrated learning experiences.
- Organizational structures should allow for continuous instructional evaluation and stress a developmental approach to learning.
- Reporting systems of student progress should be personalized within a supportive environment.
- Student evaluation should be diagnostic and prescriptive. Resources for help should be available within the school or found with help of the school.
- Special combinations of departmentalized and self-contained classrooms should be explored.
- To preserve organizational and instructional innovation in the middle grades, consideration should be given to alternative regulatory structures that reflect to a greater extent attention to instructional transitions than the current Part 100 of the Commissioner of Education's Regulations.
- Efforts should be made to arrive at a statewide consensus on goals of middle schooling.

- The lack of flexibility in course scheduling in grades seven and eight, particularly where remediation is concerned, should be the major point for reconsideration in Part 100.
- In evaluating schools' effectiveness, consideration at the State level should include efforts by districts to promote developmental growth through nonrequired activity offerings.
- There must be greater acknowledgement of innovative programs for gifted adolescents, including adequate State funding to support programs and identification efforts.
- Teachers of young adolescents should be certified within a flexible framework, which emphasizes the special needs of adolescence.
- Before an overly broad area of certification is adopted by regulation, alternatives (such as N-3 and 4-8) should be explored with flexibility coming from inservice programs and certification amendments.
- Any changes in current certification methods should be compatible with tenure provisions, seniority rights and demands created by implementation of the Regents Action Plan.
- Considering the load of guidance counselors, outlets for career counseling, support services, and agency networking must be sought, supported by funding that allows for local discretion.
- Schools and communities should cooperate in assessing what is available for adolescents, what adolescents may contribute to the community, and how to go about bringing youth and community together.
- Students themselves should be encouraged to be a part of the planning process and to articulate their needs for employment, after-school activities, and health-related services.
- Schools for adolescents must make direct efforts to gain community support. School policies should reflect openness to community concerns and support a mechanism in place to handle them.
- Schools for adolescents should have in place an effective reporting and feedback process with parents.
- Educational policymakers should create new opportunities for dialogue, while reassessing services to adolescents and seeking to eliminate program conflicts and overlaps.

New York State School Boards Association.
Meeting in the Middle:
Directions in Schooling
for Young Adolescents,
 1987, pp. iii-iv.

Appendix D

Supplemental Bibliography

Regarding

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